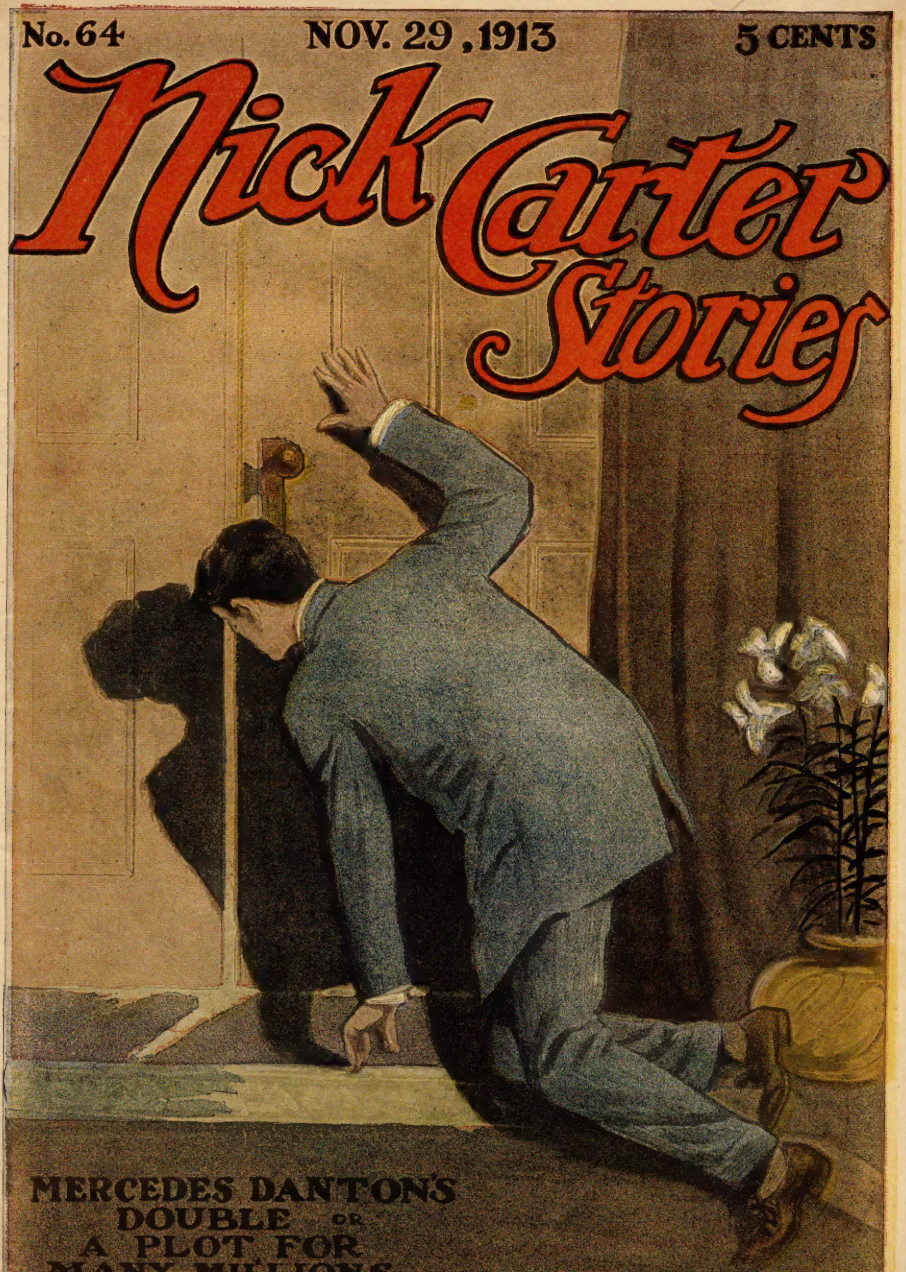
No. 64 NOV. 29, 1913 5 CENTS

Nick Carter Stories



MERCEDES DANTON'S DOUBLE OR A PLOT FOR MANY MILLIONS

STREET & SMITH - PUBLISHERS - NEW YORK

NICK CARTER STORIES

Issued Weekly. Entered as Second-class Matter at the New York Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, *79-89 Seventh Ave., New York.*

Copyright, 1913, by STREET & SMITH. *O. G. Smith and G. C. Smith, Proprietors.*

Terms to NICK CARTER STORIES Mail Subscribers.
(Postage Free.)
Single Copies or Back Numbers, 5c. Each.

3 months	65c.	One year	$2.50
4 months	85c.	2 copies one year	4.00
6 months	$1.25	1 copy two years	4.00

How to Send Money—By post-office or express money order, registered letter, bank check or draft, at our risk. At your own risk if sent by currency, coin, or postage stamps in ordinary letter.

Receipts—Receipt of your remittance is acknowledged by proper change of number on your label. If not correct you have not been properly credited, and should let us know at once.

No. 64. NEW YORK, November 29, 1913. **Price Five Cents.**

MERCEDES DANTON'S DOUBLE;

Or, A PLOT FOR MANY MILLIONS.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MERCEDES.

Nick Carter had just left the Waldorf-Astoria by way of the main entrance, on Thirty-fourth Street. He walked slowly toward Fifth Avenue and was in the act of turning the corner toward the southward when a closed automobile of the limousine type halted at the curb at a point about midway in the block.

The door of the automobile swung open and a woman appeared for one instant at the opening. At the same instant two men, who were passing and who happened to be directly abreast of the point where the automobile had halted, came to a sudden stop. One of them uttered an exclamation of mingled astonishment and anger and darted forward away from his companion and toward the woman who had not yet wholly emerged into view, and whose identity the detective could not determine.

It was evident that she discovered the man almost as soon as he saw her, for she uttered a little startled cry of consternation, and drew back like a flash into the automobile again.

At the same instant the chauffeur, as if warned by her cry, and also as if prepared for just such an attack, brought the business end of a monkey wrench down with a sharp blow against the aggressor's head, and so jammed his hat over his eyes and almost felled him to the pavement. Then, starting the automobile and throwing in the high gear, the big car was hurried away at a furious pace, and was soon out of sight around the corner of Thirty-third Street.

Nick Carter witnessed the whole thing, which did not occupy more than three or four seconds of time; but during those few seconds he was steadily approaching nearer to the spot where it happened, so that by the time he reached it, the man with his hat over his eyes had succeeded in removing it. But he was standing with his back toward the detective, shaking his fist in the direction the automobile had gone and was swearing softly to himself.

Nick Carter, however, recognized him at once, and he came to a halt, smiling, while he waited for the angry man to turn in his direction—which, after a moment of contemplative profanity, he did.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed instantly and impulsively, for he also recognized the detective; and he grasped Nick Carter's extended hand with a fervor which was as genuine as his rage had been only a moment before.

"I say, Nick, old chap, did you see that?" he asked, rubbing his head ruefully.

"Yes," replied Nick still smiling. "Nothing serious, I hope. Only one of your many adventures, eh, Danton? Really, I supposed you were serious when you told me not very long ago that you had turned over a new leaf. Or, is this a left-over affair?"

"Left-over affair! Didn't you see her?"

"No. I merely saw a woman—that is, I merely saw the costume of a woman, not the woman herself."

"Then you didn't recognize her?"

"Certainly not. Do I know her?"

"Know her! Say, will you wait here a second until I excuse myself to my companion, who was with me? I want to talk to you."

"Yes; I will wait."

Danton hurried away, made his excuses to the man who had halted a few feet distant and was awaiting him, and then returned to Nick Carter.

"Shall we go into the hotel, shall we walk, or shall we—what shall we do, Carter? I want dreadfully to talk with you."

"Let's walk. We can go in the direction of my house. That is where I was headed for when your episode of the

automobile arrested my attention. Now, what is the matter, Danton?"

"Everything is the matter."

"Your reply is neither lucid nor comprehensive."

"No, I suppose not. I wish you had seen who it was who started to descend from the carriage."

"In that case, and as I did not see or recognize the person, suppose you tell me who the lady was."

"It was my sister, Mercedes."

"Ah!" said Nick, and stopped. He was greatly astonished, but not a sign of his feelings appeared in his voice. He uttered the exclamation in exactly the same tone he would have used if Danton had said that the woman was the Queen of Sheba, or the High Duchess of Benkakakiak.

"Ever since the murder of Ramon Orizaba,* about two weeks ago—it will be two weeks to-morrow, will it not?—one trouble has followed another until it seems almost as if the family and the home at Linden Fells is accursed.

"My mother was taken ill the day of the funeral. Her illness came on so suddenly that I cannot get it out of my head that she was poisoned. However, we sent her away at once, and she is better now. She is at Newport."

"Well?" said Nick.

"Well, Mercedes was preparing for an extended trip abroad, even before this misfortune came to the house. After the murder she was more determined than ever to go, and sought to hurry the preparations of her friends, who were to accompany her on the trip; but they did not hurry fast enough, so she resolved to start on alone, with only her two maids.

"In the meantime, Nick, she did not act at all like herself. I saw very little of her, and even that little was most unsatisfactory. She was strangely unlike herself."

"Did you not talk with her about it?"

"I tried to, but she wouldn't talk."

"But I supposed there was the utmost confidence and sympathy between you and your sister."

"So there always has been until now. The fact is, a week ago last night we quarreled."

"Not seriously, I hope?"

"N-no. That is, I did not regard it as serious at the time, for we have had worse spats than that one, many a time. However, she disappeared the following day."

"What is that?" asked Nick, stopping abruptly in their walk. "Disappeared, you say?"

"Yes, that is what I said. We quarreled a week ago last night—Saturday night. Sunday morning I slept late, breakfasted alone, and came into the city almost immediately after. I did not return to the Fells until toward evening. When I arrived there she had gone."

"Gone where?"

"How do I know where? If I had known, I wouldn't have cared. I have neither seen nor heard a sign of her from that time till just now when that automobile drove up against the curb and she started to alight from it. Naturally, when the automobile stopped almost in front of me, I looked toward it. You can imagine my astonishment when I saw and recognized Mercedes. You saw what happened then."

"Yes. I saw what happened then. Are you sure that the lady was Mercedes?"

"Am I certain that you are you? I saw her as plainly as I see you now."

"Did you also recognize the chauffeur who struck you with the monkey wrench?"

"No."

"Did you see him at all, so that you would have recognized him if you had seen him?"

"Sure, I saw him—quite well enough to know him again, the next time I see him."

"And he was a stranger to you?"

"I do not remember that I ever saw him before."

"Did she—did the woman, whom you believed to be Mercedes, say anything to him when you started toward the carriage?"

"Not a word."

"Are you sure?"

"I am positive. Why?"

"Well, it seems strange that a chauffeur whom you do not know, and who, therefore, would not have been likely to have struck you without instructions, should do that very thing without orders. Now, please be particular, Danton. Is it not possible that you may be mistaken, and that the woman in the carriage was not Mercedes, but a person who may look very much like her?"

"No; it is not possible. I saw her plainly."

"In that case, I do not see just why you wish to talk to me about the story."

"Good heavens, Carter! Don't you suppose I want to find my sister?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. But if that was your sister, it is quite evident that she does not want to find you, or care to have you find her. If the occupant of that carriage was Mercedes Danton, she had mighty good reasons for acting as she did, and I will tell you very frankly, Reginald, as between you and Mercedes, I will take her side of the question every time the question comes up."

Reginald Danton took a quick step forward and turned, thus placing himself directly in front of the detective, so that both were obliged to come to a stop. Then he held out his hand and smiled.

"Shake," he said.

"Why?" asked Nick.

"On that last proposition—that, as between Mercedes and me, you will take her side of the question every time. That is what I want you to do. In other words, I don't care a fig whose side of the question you take, as long as it benefits her in the end.

"I love my sister better than anybody else in the world," young Danton went on voluntarily; "better than everybody else in the world put together. She's in trouble of some kind, and I haven't any more idea what it is than the man in the moon; neither can I find out what it is any more than the same mythical personage. Mercedes left the house without a written word to anybody. She took one of her maids with her—a new one, who had been in her employ only a month or so, and she left word with the other one that she would write.

"She did not write. I supposed, of course, she had gone to Newport, where mother is, and on Wednesday I ran over there. She was not there, and had not been there. Mother did not even know that she was not at home, and I didn't enlighten her; and there you are.

"Mercedes went out of the house last Sunday," he continued desperately, "a week ago to-day, and——"

*See NICK CARTER STORIES No. 60: "The Murder at Linden Fells."

Danton stopped and brushed his eyes quickly. Then, with his tones filled with emotion, he said:

"The fact is, Nick, I've got a 'hunch,' as the race-track people say. It never occurred to me till this very moment, but as sure as fate I believe that there is foul play somewhere. What you said about the chauffeur suggests it.

"Good God, Carter! do you suppose it could be possible that Mercedes did not leave home of her own free will?"

CHAPTER II.

A STRANGE LEAVE-TAKING.

The detective strode on in silence for some distance before he replied, and then he said, very slowly:

"I have seen very little of your sister, Reginald, but what I have seen of her, and what I know of her character, assures me that she would never even consider the taking of a step of the kind you mention without good and sufficient reason. Furthermore, I feel sufficient personal interest in her to make it my duty to find her and ask her for her side of the story, so now, if you will come into the house and follow me to my study, I will ask you to tell me all you know about the affair up to the present moment.

"You may tell me first, what was the quarrel about?"

"You."

"Eh? What is that?"

"We quarreled about you."

"About me! Humph! I should like you to tell me the particulars of that quarrel, if you please."

"The whole thing did not really amount to a row of pins," said Danton.

"Nevertheless, I should like to see the point of each pin," replied the detective, with a smile.

"Your name has been mentioned very often between us, ever since the death of Orizaba."

"Well?"

"I could see—er—that—er—when you were there at that time, that—er—well, that you admired Mercedes very much, indeed."

"You were entirely correct in that decision."

"I could also see that she was especially drawn toward you; in short, that she admired you almost as much as you did her."

"I am very much pleased to hear you say that. I did not suppose that she had had time to remember my existence," replied the detective frankly.

"It is a funny thing, Carter, that you can be so mighty shrewd about seeing things in one light, and still not be able to see a deuced thing in another—that is, from another and different point of view."

"That is a very ordinary human failing, Danton. But, go on," urged Nick.

"Mercedes has always held rather extraordinary ideas about love and marriage; about men, women, and things socially, much to the annoyance of my mother and to the amusement of my father."

There was a pause. Danton was evidently quite nervous. Then, deciding to take the bull by the horns, the young fellow blurted out:

"I think, Carter, that you almost came up to her idea of the ideal man."

"Nonsense, Danton!"

"No, Nick, I am speaking very seriously. Please remember that I am talking of my sister. And you can easily see from my manner that I am far from being in a trifling mood."

"I do, my boy, but get down to the quarrel."

"I'm getting down to it. All this is a preamble which must be told in order that you may understand all of it—and in understanding it, I want you to be particular not to misunderstand anything I may say, to understand me perfectly."

"You are rather obscure just now."

"Not intentionally. In order to explain so that you will understand, I must confess to you, Nick, that I made Mercedes believe that I thought she was more than half in love with—you."

"In other words, you bantered her upon what you knew to be untrue; you merely teased her because you had discovered a theme which did tease."

"Exactly."

"Well?"

"It was all raillery, you know. Just making fun. On the level, I had not an idea of making real trouble."

"Yes."

"And, in doing so, in order to tease her the more, I did not hesitate to make fun of you."

"Naturally."

"In short—you know I want to be entirely frank with you. That is one of my few virtues, frankness, is it not? In short, at the time when we quarreled, I permitted myself to speak slightly of you. Quite so, in fact."

"Suppose you tell me what you said."

"I say, Carter, that's mean, you know, to make me tell what I said."

"You have already explained why you said the things you did say."

"I know, but they will sound differently now, repeated in cold blood."

"Tell me what you said about me to your sister. I want to know all about the quarrel."

"Well, if I do, you will have to promise me first that you will forgive, beforehand, all that I shall say."

"Certainly, Danton. I understand perfectly, that you were only teasing your sister, and I know something about the lengths to which brothers will go on occasions of that kind, as well as some of the liberties they will take, not alone with their sister themselves, but also with any other person who happens to be under discussion. Believe me, I will take all that you said in an utterly impersonal manner."

"Well, I accused her of being in love with you, of course," said Danton.

"Yes. And then?"

"I told her that you were a widower, but——"

"Go on."

"Confound it, I can't! I simply explained in my own way, which won't bear repeating now, that you had worshiped your first wife, and that you would wear sackcloth and ashes the rest of your days—please forgive me, old man!—and that there was no hope that another could ever take her place in your heart."

"I see nothing to offend me about that statement. What next?"

"Why, then I made fun of your profession. I asked her how she would like to be known as Mrs. Detective Carter, and all that, don't you know—and I kept at it until I got her thoroughly angry."

"Well?"

"She told me that if I were half the man that Nick Carter is, people would have a lot more respect for me, which I admitted, and that if she loved a man it would make no difference to her whether he was a detective, or what he was, so long as he was a good and honorable man, who did his duty to his neighbor and to himself, and all that. Really, she read me quite a lecture, until I'm blowed if she didn't get me mad, too. She did, and that's a fact."

"She told you a few facts, I suppose."

"Facts! Good heavens! You ought to have heard her. I felt like a kitten in the grasp of a bull terrier, before she got through with me."

"And then——"

"Well, among other things she told me that I belonged to a class that was ruining posterity, whatever that may mean, inasmuch as posterity isn't here to be ruined; that I had never earned a cent of money in my life, and that all on earth I was good for was to spend the money which my father provided—and a whole lot more of that sort until I left her in a rage.

"That is all; but you can see that the quarrel was not very serious."

"That was Saturday afternoon?"

"Yes."

"And you did not see her again?"

"No. I came into the city in the evening, and I did not go out home until late. Then, in the morning, Sunday, I slept late, breakfasted alone, and came into town again. She went away Sunday."

"And you say she left no written message?"

"No."

"But she left a verbal one with one of the maids?"

"Yes."

"What was that message—just as it was repeated to you?"

"Simply that she was going away, and that she would write."

"Nothing more?"

"Not a thing."

"She took one maid with her?"

"Yes."

"What else?"

"Eh?"

"What else did she take with her?"

"Pretty nearly everything she owned, I should say."

"Do you mean that she took all of her trunks?"

"Yes; all of her own and some of mother's as well."

"How many in all?"

"Good gracious, Carter, you don't suppose I have kept tabs on the number of trunks those two women own, do you? I only know what the maid told me about it."

"Well, what did she tell you?"

"She said that it seemed strange that my sister had taken the new maid, who was not entirely accustomed to her ways, and left her behind, who knew all about her, particularly when she was intending to be gone for a long time—but that she thought it stranger still that her mistress had said nothing to her about her intention of going."

"Ah! The maid who was left behind did not know that your sister intended to go that day, then?"

"No."

"Where was she when Mercedes started away?

"Where was she when the many trunks were being made ready for the journey?"

"She had been sent into the city on an errand. The trunks had left the house when she returned and she was only just in time to see my sister depart."

"What was it she said to you about the trunks?"

"Merely that she thought it extremely strange that her mistress had taken so many trunks and so many things with her."

"In short, Danton, the maid told you those things simply to give you an opportunity to question her."

"By Jove, Carter, I believe now that she did that very thing. She wanted me to question her."

"Which proves that she knew many things which she believed you should know, but which her position forbade her from volunteering to tell."

"Yes. I see it now. But it is better as it is, for I would have garbled the whole thing. Now, you will question her, and so get at the core of the thing."

"I hope so, Danton—I hope so."

CHAPTER III.

MERCEDES' FLIGHT.

The encounter between the detective and Reginald Danton took place shortly before dark on the evening of the last Sunday in June, and, therefore, at about six o'clock.

After an hour passed together, during which Danton could give Nick but little more in the way of information than that which has already been recorded, the young man took his departure from Nick Carter's Madison Avenue residence, and the detective was left alone to think over the incidents of the afternoon.

He had agreed with young Danton that he would go out to the Fells, which was the name of the Dantons' beautiful country place in Riverdale, which lies along the banks of the Hudson in Bronx borough, early the following day, and there hold an interview with the maid. After looking over the ground more thoroughly, he had said that he would determine if there really existed any reason why he should search for the temporary hiding place of Mercedes Danton.

"You see," he had said, in conclusion, in talking with his friend, "it is one thing if she has been induced to leave home through any undue influence, and it is another if she has simply gone away of her own free will.

"But I agree with you, Danton, for from what I know of your sister, I do not think she would do such a thing, when there is, or appears to be, no reason for her action."

When, however, Danton had taken his departure, and the detective was seated alone in his room, he went slowly over the ground that had already been covered, much more deliberately than he had done while the young millionaire was with him.

His first remark, too, made to himself in the privacy of his own study, demonstrated the general trend of his conjectures.

"Mercedes Danton never left her home in that manner of her own free will," he said aloud. "I am as positive of that point as if she had told me so herself.

"Now, let me see what I already know about the circumstances surrounding her, in her home, which might lead to some clew for the reason of her going. I'll go back first to the killing of Orizaba.

"Ramon Orizaba was reputed to be a distant relative. He was killed by Paul Rogers, who was Reginald Danton's

valet. Letters found among the effects of Orizaba showed that he had been pursued by a Nemesis for upward of ten years, but they do not demonstrate clearly why. Rogers had been in the employ of Danton for about two years—something more, I believe.

"I found the whole family rather reticent about both Orizaba and Rogers, and while at the time I attributed that reticence to mere family pride, it now appears that there might have been another reason for it.

"After the murder, Rogers left a letter for Danton in which he confessed the murder, told how he did it, refused to tell why he did it—and then he disappeared. Since that time not a trace of Rogers has been discovered.

"He disappeared off the face of the earth almost as completely as if he had gone to the edge of it and jumped off.

"Next: When young Danton was describing to me the death of Orizaba, he referred, in an abstract way, to some pretentions to the hand of Mercedes which Orizaba had made. That was a matter which I had no occasion to inquire into at the time, and now, of course, it is too late to do so. Danton would resent it; Mercedes would resent it; their mother would resent it—and, in fact, at the present moment at least, I can think of no good excuse for doing so.

"Next: If I am any reader of character at all, I must concede that Mercedes and her brother appeared to love each other with a fondness that is unusual, and it was certainly sincere on both sides.

"Now it is absurd to suppose that the quarrel which took place between the brother and sister had anything whatever to do with the fact of her leaving home, it was merely an incident; and——

"Next: There is only one feature of the case that has come under my observation or knowledge which is at all significant, and that is that Mercedes should cry out in alarm upon seeing her brother on the street, should retreat back into her automobile and drive hastily away, and that her chauffeur should strike him with a monkey wrench.

"Now: I do not believe that Mercedes Danton would dodge any living person on earth—I think she is made of the stuff that would dare to face anybody or anything at any time or place. In other words, if ever I saw a young woman upon whose character was stamped every indication of courage, Mercedes Danton was that woman.

"Again: If Mercedes had left home willingly and taken all that baggage with her, she would not have remained in the city of New York at this time of the year, and hence she would not have been where her brother could have encountered her, and if such an encounter really took place, Mercedes would not seek to avoid it, and, least of all, would she have instructed her chauffeur to strike her brother with a wrench.

"Ergo: The woman in the cab was not Mercedes Danton. Reginald, for some reason, believed her to be his sister, and for some reason also, the woman, whoever she was, considered it imperative that she should avoid an interview with Reginald.

"Now, there is not a circumstance connected with this whole affair which should induce me to investigate it, if I regard it purely from a professional standpoint; but, on the other hand, if I regard it from a personal standpoint, considering myself the friend of Reginald—or shall I confess it to myself?—considering myself so solicitous only for the welfare of Mercedes herself, there is every reason why I should at least satisfy myself that all is well—or, rather, that nothing is wrong."

Nick Carter had just arrived at this decision when he was told that a client awaited him in the reception room, and he descended quickly, to find there a woman, who rose from her chair and bowed respectfully to him when he entered the room.

"I do not know if you will remember me, Mr. Carter," she said, coming at once to the point, "and I hardly know, sir, how to explain the reason for my coming here at all. I fear that you will consider it a great liberty for me to take, not only with your time, but with the affairs of my mistress."

"I remember you very well," replied Nick, "although I never heard your name. You are a maid to Miss Mercedes Danton.

"Concerning your coming here, make your mind easy at once, for I already know why you are here, and I am glad you have come. I should have gone out to the Fells in the morning to talk with you had you not come to me here?"

"Did I understand you to say that you know why I have come, Mr. Carter?" she inquired, evidently greatly surprised.

"Yes. Mr. Reginald Danton has told me that his sister left home a week ago, rather mysteriously."

"Oh! I see, sir."

"Now, if you please," said the detective, "I will ask you some questions, and I would rather you would confine what you have to tell to me, to the replies to those questions. If, after we have finished, there should be other things which you would like to touch upon, do so. First, then, suppose you tell me your name."

"Sarah Kearney, sir."

"How long have you been in the employ of Miss Danton, Sarah?"

"Ten years. I have served her since she was a little girl, nine years old."

"Good. And you were quite deeply in her confidence, were you not?"

"She told me almost everything, Mr. Carter—until quite lately, sir."

"Do you mean that she has partly withdrawn her confidence of late?"

"Yes, sir. Partly."

"Since when?"

"Since just before the mur—the death of Mr. Orizaba, sir."

"You think her manner altered toward you, about that time, or just before his death?"

"No, sir, I cannot say that her manner altered; only I am certain that there was some sorrow or trouble on her mind which she did not tell to me."

"I see. And before that, or rather up to that time, she had been in the habit of confiding her troubles to you, had she?"

"Always, sir."

"Now let us take a back step for a moment: Tell me just why you came to see me to-night."

"Why, Mr. Carter, you have already said that you know, sir."

"I know the reason for your wanting assistance, but I do not know why you selected me to render that assistance. For example, if this occasion had arisen a month

ago, you would not have come here to me about it, would you?"

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"Because I did not know you then, sir."

"Neither do you know me now. Had you never heard the name of Nick Carter before the time of the death of Orizaba?"

"Oh, yes, indeed!"

"Well, then there is some reason other than you have stated, why you have come here. Now see if you can tell me what it is."

"Only what Miss Mercedes herself said to me."

"Ah! Well, what was that?"

"Why, only a few days before she went away she told me——"

"Tell me her exact words if you can."

"'Sarah,' she said, 'if the time should ever come when anything should happen to me which you cannot explain, go to Mr. Carter and ask him to help you.'

"That was all she said, sir. I asked her why she said such things, and she only smiled, and replied that she knew you would be her friend if she should ever need one."

"Very good," replied Nick. "Now come down, for the present, to the day she went away. How did it happen that you were not at home at the time Miss Mercedes packed her trunks?"

"She sent me away, to the city, early in the day, sir, on an errand which took me all the day. I did not get back until just before dark. She had already entered her automobile to drive to the station."

"And the trunks had already gone, eh?"

"Yes."

"Do you think that your return surprised her? That she expected to be gone before your return?"

"Yes, sir. I was impressed by that idea."

"And that she sent you on that fruitless errand for the explicit purpose of getting you out of the house while she was making her preparations for leaving?"

"Yes."

"Was the other maid in the automobile with her when you arrived at the house at the moment of her departure?"

"Yes."

"What is her name?"

"Isabel Benton."

"Rather a high-sounding name for a maid, eh? We will return to her presently. I shall want to know more about her."

"Well, sir, it won't be much. Nobody could tell anything about her. She was a puzzle."

"Indeed? I like puzzles—of that sort. Now let us return to your mistress. How did she appear when you saw her in the automobile. Was she pale?"

"I could not say, sir. Her veil was drawn tightly over her face so that I could not see her features."

"Yet you are certain that it was your mistress?"

"Why, of course, sir."

"But why, of course?"

"Just that it was her. I saw the automobile—the door was already closed and the chauffeur was on the point of starting the car when I came up the walk. There was a small trunk on the box with the chauffeur, and I suspected that Miss Mercedes was going away, so I called to him to wait, and ran forward before he had a chance to start."

"Good. Did Miss Mercedes seem annoyed because you delayed them?"

"She seemed in a hurry, sir. In fact, she said that she was in a hurry."

"Tell me what she said to you."

"'Sarah,' she said, 'I am in great haste. Please tell Mr. Reginald that I will write to him. I will also write to you, Sarah.'"

"'Will you not send for me to come to you?' I asked her. 'It will be the first time you have been without me in ten years,' I urged; and she replied: 'Perhaps.'

"That was all. She was gone before I had a chance to say anything more."

"Did you recognize her voice?"

"Of course."

"Was she not coughing or laughing, or did she not hold her handkerchief over her mouth and nostrils while she was speaking to you?"

"Goodness, sir, how could you know that? Yes, sir, just before she spoke to me she put her handkerchief under her veil, and——"

"And talked through it when she spoke to you. Very good, Sarah, I am beginning to think that your mistress had already gone when—but we won't anticipate just at present."

CHAPTER IV.

SEEKING CLEWS.

"Do you mean, sir," asked Sarah, "that it might not have been my mistress who was in the automobile when I supposed that I was bidding her good-by?"

"Yes. I mean that it might not have been your mistress, although we must act for the present on the hypothesis that it was she. Supposing that it was, the fact of her holding her handkerchief to her mouth while she was talking to you would lead one to suppose that she had some reason for wishing to conceal some emotion from you, would it not?"

"I suppose so. I had not thought of that."

"No. I suppose you stood there and watched the automobile until it was out of sight?"

"Yes."

"Then you went into the house and went directly to her rooms, did you not?"

"Yes."

"What was the condition of the rooms?"

"I never saw them in such confusion, sir."

"Showing that the packing had been done quite hastily; is that the idea?"

"It is, sir."

"Who did the packing? Of course, you inquired."

"Naturally, sir. Isabel Benton must have done it all, Mr. Carter."

"Unless her mistress helped her, you mean."

"Nobody else helped her, sir. She ordered the trunks brought to the rooms, and they were packed there. Nobody helped her."

"What was packed?"

"That is what surprises me, sir. I have never known Miss Danton to take so many things away with her before. Her own trunks were not sufficient. She took three trunks which belonged to her mother."

"What was put into the trunks?"

"Almost every bit of her wardrobe. She took a great many things which she has not used of late and which I know she had discarded for good, and she took one dress which I have heard her say she would never wear under any circumstances."

"What else?"

"Why, books, trinkets, keepsakes—a mass of things, sir, which she never noticed or cared for at all—and she cleaned out her writing desk, which hitherto she has only locked when we have been going away."

"What else?"

"Well, sir—and this I cannot explain at all—she took every photograph of herself that the house contained."

"What is that? Her own photographs?"

"Yes, sir. I noticed, first, that one that she had given to me was missing. Then I began to look for others. There is not a picture of her left in the house. She even went into her brother's, her mother's, and her father's room and took photographs from there."

"Her own?"

"Her own and theirs as well."

"That is rather remarkable. Was she fond of her own pictures, do you think?"

"Not at all. She paid almost no attention to them. She never kept a photograph of herself exposed to view in her own room."

"Who took the trunks to the station?"

"The men at the stable, sir."

"How many trunks were there?"

"Eleven."

"Do you know to what place those trunks were checked?"

"Yes, sir. I asked. They were checked to New York."

"Which tells us nothing, and which can never tell us anything, I expect, since an entire week has elapsed since that time.

"Sarah, did the other servants in the house know that Miss Mercedes was intending to go away that day?"

"Nobody knew it until she began sending for her trunks."

"Now, let us return to the moment when she sent you on that errand to New York."

"Very well, sir."

"How did she appear when she gave you your orders about that?"

"I did not see her then, sir."

"Not see her? How was that?"

"She sent the order to me by Isabel."

"Ah! Did you see your mistress at all that day—Sunday?"

"No, sir, I did not. Isabel attended her."

"When did you see her last?"

"Saturday night, sir."

"At what time?"

"I assisted her when she retired."

"Where was Isabel, the other maid, at that time?"

"Walking on the piazza, I think. She was not in the room."

"Who usually attended your mistress when she retired?"

"I, sir, always."

"And when she rose in the morning?"

"I did, when she required anybody. Often she was up, dressed, and out of the house before I was awake. She loved to be in the garden in the early morning."

"Did she go into the garden Sunday morning?"

"No, sir. She did not leave her rooms all day, while I was in the house."

"How does it happen that you did not go to her in her rooms?"

"Isabel told me that she had directed that we were both to remain outside. She said that Miss Mercedes was not feeling well, and did not wish to be disturbed, and that she would ring if she wanted either of us.

"Two rings were for Isabel and one was for me. She rang for Isabel twice, I think—for me, not at all."

"Was it her custom to exclude you from her rooms?"

"She never did such a thing before since I have been in her service."

"How do you account for it this time?"

"I do not account for it at all, sir."

"What time were you sent away on the errand?"

"About noon, sir."

"What was the errand?"

"I was sent to see a woman who had been recommended to us—or, rather, to Miss Danton—as one who could do fine sewing beautifully. I was to talk with her, and, if she seemed satisfactory, to engage her services; but the address was evidently incorrect, for no such person lived there. It was in Brooklyn, so I had a long distance to travel, but I made good time and so caught a train back to the Falls half an hour quicker than I otherwise would have done."

"I see. You were sent on a wild-goose chase after an imaginary person in order to get you out of the house while the packing was going on, and it was intended that you should not return until after it was all over, and she had gone, too."

"It would seem so, sir."

"The last time you saw your mistress was when you put her to bed, Saturday night?"

"Yes."

"How did she appear then?"

"As usual."

"Not troubled by anything, so far as you could determine?"

"No more than had been the general rule of late."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Well, she had not been exactly the same since—well, sir, it seems an odd circumstance for a comparison of dates in regard to my mistress, but it occurs to me that she had not been exactly the same since about the time when Paul Rogers entered the service of Mr. Reginald, as his valet."

"It is an odd circumstance to use as a comparison, Sarah. I would like you to tell me, if you please, exactly why you do so."

"Because of a very trivial thing, sir. I happened to be standing in the hallway of the house when Mr. Reginald returned from Europe and brought his new valet with him.

"Miss Mercedes came out from the drawing-room to welcome her brother, and after he had passed on up the stairs she remained there talking with me until the valet came in with some of the luggage. She turned to see who it was who had entered, and when her eyes lighted upon the face of the valet, she uttered a sudden cry of alarm, and staggered back into my arms; but she barely touched them before she had straightened up again. There was

not the slightest outward sign of emotion on her face, either.

"The valet stepped toward her, bowed, and said, in those peculiar, soft tones of his, that he was sorry he had frightened her, and she replied by laughing and telling him it was nothing at all."

"And she offered no explanation?"

"None at all."

"Did any occur to you?"

"Only that I thought she had not heard him and was really startled."

"You mean that you thought that at the time; but that afterward you changed your mind?"

"No, sir. I did not change my mind."

"Do you think that she recognized in the valet a person whom she had seen and known before?"

"Yes; I think so now."

"Why?"

"Because—well, I have no good reason, only that many times since then I have seen her look strangely at the valet when she did not know that she was observed by any one."

"How strangely? What do you mean by that?"

"I scarcely know."

"Did she seem to fear him?"

"No; rather to be studying him."

"You are of the opinion that she had seen him somewhere before?"

"Either that, or he was strangely and unaccountably like some person she had known."

"Now you have said that she had not been exactly the same since that time. In what way was she in any way different."

"That is a difficult question to answer, for the reason that there was no difference which I could explain. There would have been no difference at all to any one less intimately associated with her than I was. But there was a difference."

"Can you not give me some idea about it?"

"Only that after encountering him anywhere in the house or in the garden, she would appear, for a short interval, to be in a mood of abstraction."

"As if she were endeavoring to recall something that was half forgotten?"

"No; not that. More as if she were trying to explain something to her own satisfaction."

"Did he ever address her or she him, save on the mere formalities of the household?"

"Never that I know about."

"Did his presence ever seem to frighten her?"

"Nothing ever frightened her, sir. She possessed the courage and the self-control of a brave man."

"Do you think his presence annoyed her?"

"No; I think it only puzzled her."

"Well, Sarah, we will leave Rogers for a moment and return to Isabel. I want a word or two of information about her."

"Very good, sir."

"I see that you did not like her, but it is possible that your dislike may have been the result of jealousy rather than have arisen from any really good reason, so I wish you to make an effort to disabuse your mind of anything but justice in replying to my questions to you regarding her."

CHAPTER V.

THE BEAUTIFUL FACE OF ISABEL.

"When did Isabel Benton first make her appearance in the household?"

"About a year ago—perhaps a little more."

"Who recommended her?"

"I do not know. She came one afternoon and entered at once upon her duties. Nobody offered me any word of explanation and I sought none."

"Naturally. Did her duties conflict with yours at all?"

"Not at all. I attended my mistress' person. Isabel was more of a waiting maid, constantly in attendance. My duties were in the bedchamber and with the wardrobe; hers were entirely general."

"Still you were jealous."

"I suppose so. I thought Isabel unnecessary. There was nothing for her to do that I could not attend to."

"Exactly. Isabel is rather beautiful, as I remember her. I saw her, I think, when I was there."

"Yes; she is very beautiful—for a maid."

"I did not talk with her at all, so you must tell me how she appeared. I got the impression that she looked rather above her station; did she appear that way to you at all?"

"Yes; I think she did."

"How?"

"She is an educated young woman. I think, sir, that she had seen better days."

"You think, then, that she had not been a maid for very long before she came into Miss Mercedes' service?"

"I think she had never been a maid to anybody until she came there to serve."

"Ah! I see. Rather that she was one who had enjoyed being waited upon instead of performing the part of a servant herself."

"Exactly that, Mr. Carter. I would like to ask you, sir, if you looked at her very closely when you were at the Fells."

"No; I barely noticed her at all."

"Then, perhaps, you did not notice that there was really a striking resemblance between her and Miss Mercedes?"

"I certainly did not."

"You saw enough of her to remark that she was beautiful, did you not?"

"Yes; but it was a fleeting glance in the half light of the drawing-room when I happened to meet her in the doorway. I merely caught a glimpse of her face. It was her poise and figure that attracted my attention, as well as the delicate profile of her face."

"Then you would not notice the resemblance, for it was not observable in her profile."

"But you think there was a resemblance?"

"A decided one, sir, when you got the correct view, and that was straight in front. But I noticed it on one occasion particularly, and I gave her a severe scolding at the time, too."

"When and how was that?"

"I found her dressed in one of Miss Mercedes' party dresses once. Miss Mercedes had gone to a reception in the city, and the other members of the family were also away from home.

"By a strange chance very few of the servants were in the house, and I was, myself, supposed to be attending my mistress in New York. But it happened that I was taken

with a headache at the last moment, and, instead of going to the city, was sent to my room to rest.

"At nine o'clock in the evening I awoke from a long sleep, and, feeling much better, went down the stairs to the library to find something to read.

"I had to pass through the drawing-room on my way to the library, and you may imagine my surprise when I entered to see—as I supposed—my mistress standing before one of the long mirrors in the room.

"The carpet is very thick and soft, and she did not hear me as I approached behind her, so that I had a good view of her face in the mirror, and, Mr. Carter, I actually believed it to be Miss Mercedes—until she spoke to me.

"I uttered an exclamation of surprise at finding her there, whereupon she wheeled like lightning and confronted me. Even then the resemblance was so startling that I was not sure that she was not my mistress; but she saw that she was fairly caught, and she burst into tears, which she probably knew would be the surest way of winning me over to promise that I would not betray her."

"And she did win you over so that you never spoke of the circumstance, I suppose?" said the detective.

"I have never spoken of it till now, sir."

"Tell me what she said at the time, in explanation of her conduct."

"I don't remember much that she said, sir. She talked a steady stream for half an hour, and it was chiefly about there having been a time when she had finery of her own, and was a welcome guest at receptions such as the one where our mistress had gone.

"The dress she had put on was one which I had brought out for Miss Mercedes to wear, but which she had laid aside for another that she preferred. It had not been laid away again—was, in fact, on the bed when Isabel found it, and determined to see how she would appear with it. I was sorry for her. She could wheedle anybody with her voice."

"Ah! Her voice. Tell me about that."

"Her voice is very soft and low. Not like any other voice I ever heard, and yet, strangely enough, always remindful of a voice you have heard somewhere. Don't you know voices of that kind, sir?"

"Yes; I think I know what you mean. What was her manner, generally, in the house? Did she offend the other servants, or did they like her?"

"I think they all loved her, sir. I was the only one who distrusted her—and I could not tell you why I did so, either."

"Because you were jealous of her, doubtless."

"I think so. I think that was the only reason. I know, at least, that it is the only reason that I can give you, Mr. Carter."

"Did your mistress like her? Did she seem fond of her?"

"Yes—and no. Sometimes I thought she was fond of her, and there were times when I had an idea that she disliked her."

"Describe one of the occasions when you had reason to think that your mistress disliked Isabel."

"Miss Mercedes and I came in from the garden, together, through the side door, and we passed through the library into the drawing-room to leave some flowers in one of the vases there. Isabel was standing in the embrasure of one of the windows, in conversation with Mr. Orizaba——"

"The man whom Rogers afterward murdered; well, what happened then?"

"Miss Mercedes called to her, and ordered her to her room at once. Then she sent me out of the room, and I know that she said some sharp things to her cousin——"

"But Orizaba was not her cousin."

"He was in a way, sir. A sixth or seventh cousin. She always spoke of him as her cousin. Later, she came to her room and rang for Isabel, and I heard her tell her that one more circumstance of that kind would incur instant dismissal from her service.

"That is all I heard her say about it, but the flash of Miss Mercedes' eyes at the time, made me think that underneath it all she heartily disliked Isabel. I may have been mistaken."

"Did you often see Isabel and Orizaba together?"

"Quite often, sir. There was always a glance of mutual meaning between them when they believed themselves unobserved—and once, quite late at night, when I had stolen out of the house to the hammock when the others were in their beds, I saw them talking together on the piazza."

"Now let us get back to the moment you returned to the Fells after your errand to the city.

"When you stepped forward to speak to your mistress, who was already in the automobile, was Isabel also there—in the automobile?"

"Why—yes, sir."

"Are you sure? Did you see her?"

"Of course, I saw her."

"I mean, did you see her face so that you recognized it, or did you only suppose it to be her, because of the circumstance? Think, now, and reply carefully."

"Why, I have always been certain that it was Isabel, sir."

"Did she not also wear a veil?"

"I really do not know, sir."

"In other words, you did not really look at her at all. You had eyes only for your beloved mistress. Is that not true?"

"Perhaps it is."

"What automobile was it—an open one?"

"No, sir. It was the big limousine."

"Did you speak to Isabel, or did she address any word to you at that time?"

"No. I think not. I was so surprised, so disturbed, and I will confess, sir, so angry, that I do not remember much about the circumstance, only that Miss Mercedes was going away without me, and that she bade me good-by so coldly that it almost broke my heart."

"So, as a matter of fact, you do not really know that Isabel was in the limousine at all?"

"Why, yes, I do."

"Well, how do you know it? That is what I want to find out."

"Why, who else would be there if she was not?"

"Exactly; who else, indeed?"

"I don't know what you mean by that, sir?"

"No; I suppose you do not. Now what was the first thing you did after you entered the house, when they had driven away?"

"I went to my own room, threw myself on the bed, and cried."

"To be sure. Sarah, do you happen to remember if, during the few days that immediately preceded Miss Mercedes' departure, there had been a strange woman in the house, in any capacity?"

"There was a woman who came to do some light sewing —some hemming of linen, I think; but she went away Saturday evening."

"How do you know that she went away Saturday evening? Did you see her go?"

"No. I heard my mistress dismiss her."

"Now, Sarah, just two or three more questions, and then you may return to the Fells."

CHAPTER VI.

IN HOURLY PERIL OF DEATH.

"Sarah," said the detective, rising and crossing the room two or three times, "the acts connected with the tragedy which occurred at the Fells two weeks ago are still fresh in your memory, are they not?

"I refer, of course, to the murder of Orizaba by Mr. Reginald's valet, Paul Rogers. You recall all the circumstances, do you not?"

"I think so, sir."

"Now, I want to recall to your attention several things you have told me, to which you have not attached much importance. I want to group them together for your consideration, and, after I have done so, ask you a few questions upon points suggested to me by them."

"Very well. I only wish I might be able to tell you something of importance."

"You have already told me several things of very great importance."

"Indeed, sir, I did not know it."

"Possibly not. Now listen."

"Yes, sir."

"You have said that Miss Mercedes seemed startled when she saw Paul Rogers for the first time."

"Yes, sir."

"You have told me that, although Isabel seemed to come to the house without especial recommendation, she seemed not unknown to Orizaba, and that, in fact, there seemed to be a very friendly understanding between them."

"Yes; I often thought there was."

"And you have spoken of a rather strong resemblance between your mistress and Isabel."

"It was strong, sir, all but the profile."

"Did it ever strike you that there was also a faint resemblance between Miss Mercedes and the man she called her cousin—Ramon Orizaba?"

"Quite so; her mother used to speak of it often."

"Well, now, did that resemblance extend to Orizaba and Isabel?"

"Yes, sir; decidedly. There was quite general comment about it among the servants."

"What was your own opinion about it?"

"Why, I thought it rather noticeable. I once told Isabel that she might readily pass for Mr. Orizaba's sister."

"What reply did she make?"

"She laughed and said that she was one of those persons who resembled almost everybody or anybody."

"Humph! Now tell me, Sarah, what effect did the sudden and tragic death of Orizaba seem to have upon Isabel?"

"None at all that I could notice. I thought she was paler than usual, but we were all of us that. I do not think she acted any differently from the others."

"You have known Miss Mercedes so long and so well that you would notice anything which seemed to affect her, at once, would you not?"

"Surely."

"You know, of course, that Mr. Reginald did not like Orizaba?"

"Certainly. We all knew that. He did not disguise the fact."

"How did Miss Mercedes feel toward him?"

"I think she dreaded him. If she were anbody else, I should have said that she feared him—and yet, she was very gracious to him."

"Do you think, by any possible chance that she was in love with him, or that she had ever been in love with him?"

"N-no."

"Why do you hesitate?"

"Because of several contradictory things she did. I used sometimes to think that she despised him; again I would think that she dreaded him; again that she was fond of him. I know that she was very kind to him, and I know, also, that she often supplied him with money.

"I even know of one occasion when Isabel carried money to him for her, and—that reminds me of one thing which I had totally forgotten. She called him by his first name."

"Who did?"

"Isabel. She called him Ramon when she gave him the money. I think the money surprised me more than the use of the name, and I was incensed because my mistress had trusted her instead of me."

"And so you forgot the use of the first name. All right, Sarah. Now I want you to tell me exactly what you fear might have befallen your mistress—what the fear was that induced you to come to me."

"I don't know, sir. I fear everything. I cannot get it out of my head that some dreadful thing has happened to her. It was not like her to go away like that. It was not like her to bid me good-by as she did. It was totally unlike her to leave such a message for Mr. Reginald."

"And," said Nick, "it was unlike her to pack her trunks in the way she did—to take away the articles she did—to care about her own photographs—to cover her mouth with her handkerchief when she was bidding you good-by —to have been gone an entire week without sending you word after she said that she would do so—in fact, Sarah, there is nothing connected with her going away that is at all like Miss Mercedes Danton, is there?"

"Not a thing, sir; not one."

"And so you have become frightened lest, in some way, she has been induced to go away against her own wishes and will; lest she has been unduly influenced. Is that it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now, Sarah, if you were ill, and obliged to go to the doctor, would you tell him only half of your troubles, or would you tell him all?"

"I should tell him all, sir. What do you mean by that question?"

"Never mind; answer me another. How do you suppose I manage to earn my living at the detective business?"

"Why, sir, how can I answer that?"

"I will answer it for you. I accomplish that difficult task by understanding perfectly when people are telling me the truth and when they are deceiving me.

"Now there is a difference between telling a downright lie, and only telling a part of the truth and withholding the remainder. I don't think you have told me a lie, to-day, Sarah, but I am quite sure that you have not told me all the truth. There is something you have kept back—something that I should know."

"Mr. Carter, I——"

"I would not amount to much at my business, Sarah, if I was not sharp enough to discover that much in your conduct this evening."

"But, really, sir, there is nothing more that I can tell. Truly, Mr. Carter."

"Tut-tut, Sarah, there is something more that you can tell me, if you will, and that something is about—who shall I say it is about, Sarah? Shall I say it is about Paul Rogers, the fugitive valet, who murdered Mr. Orizaba, or shall I say that it is about Isabel—or, better still, shall I say that it is about both of them? Come now, which?"

"There is nothing more that I can tell, sir."

"Now, Sarah, that is pure obstinacy. I know that there is something more. You could, for example, tell me why it was that your mistress was startled when she beheld Paul Rogers acting as valet to her brother—and you could also explain why you were almost, if not quite, as much astonished yourself."

"One might suppose that you were present at the time, sir."

"Sarah, you were in Europe with your mistress while she was at school there; you know perfectly well that you both knew Paul Rogers at that time, and you know that you would not have known him in a way to have affected you when you saw him again, if his position at that time had been in accordance with his valethood, later; and, therefore, you know that Paul Rogers was not his true name any more than valet was his true position. Who was he when you knew him in Europe, Sarah?"

"There is nothing more that I can tell, sir."

"Not even to save your mistress from probable peril?"

"Not even to save her from positive death, sir," she said, and her lips shut tightly together over her teeth.

"What!" exclaimed Nick. "Is it so serious as all that? This is worse than I supposed. You are keeping the secret because your mistress has sworn you to secrecy, and has charged you never to tell, even to save her life or your own. Is it not so?"

"I have nothing more to tell, sir."

"All right. If you won't, you won't, and I see that you are determined to say no more. But, all the same, Sarah, I will find a way to make you speak, or I will discover what I wish to know in some other manner. You may return to the Fells now. I shall be there in the morning."

Sarah rose to her feet and started toward the door, but before she had crossed the room she stopped and began to sob.

Nick remained silent, watching her, and presently she turned and faced him again.

"I think my heart is breaking, sir," she said. "I do not know what to do."

"There is only one thing for you to do if you would serve your mistress whom you love, and that is to tell me everything you know which will throw light upon this strange disappearance.

"Has it occurred to you, Sarah," went on Nick kindly, "that the woman in the limousine, who put her handkerchief to her mouth when she bade you good-by, was not your mistress at all, but was in reality Isabel Benton, dressed in her clothes?

"Has it occurred to you that the woman in the other seat of the limousine was not Isabel, but was, in reality, the woman who had been hemming linen in the house and who was sent away—but who did not go—the preceding night?"

"Where, then, was my mistress?"

"Where, indeed?"

"But if she was not in the limousine, where could she have been? She was not in the house."

"No. She was not in the house, because she had been carried out of the house," said Nick.

"Carried out of the house! Oh, God! You don't mean——"

"I don't know what I mean, Sarah, save that she had been spirited away in the night, after you had put her to bed—after she had been drugged, or possibly murdered."

"Murdered! My Mercedes? No, no, no! I will not believe it. No, no, no, no!"

"If she was not murdered, then, Sarah, rest assured that she is in hourly peril of death," said Nick slowly.

"The conspirators," the detective continued gravely, "who dared to take her away, and who dared to plot the substitution of another in her place, will not hesitate to put her out of the way the moment they can do so with safety."

CHAPTER VII.

A QUESTION OF FOUR LIVES.

Sarah tottered back into a chair after Nick Carter had ceased speaking, and she remained there, with her head resting in her hands, and quietly sobbing until the detective addressed her again.

"Come, come, Sarah, this will not do at all," he said. "Remember what I said to you—that I shall be at the Fells in the morning. You can have from now until then to think over all that we have talked about, and to decide upon the importance of the additional knowledge you can supply. I think, by morning, you will have decided to tell me all."

"Very good, sir. I will go; and to-night, on my knees, I will pray for guidance so that I may decide to do what is right in the morning."

"All right. Let it remain that way, until you see me to-morrow."

"Tell me, sir, do you think that Miss Mercedes is in immediate danger?"

"I am only groping in the dark about her now, Sarah, but I think there is a deeply laid plot here, that is destined to affect the entire family of Dantons.

"The mother was taken ill suddenly, and Mr. Reginald believes that she was poisoned. She is better now, and, probably, out of the reach of her enemies. I would not be surprised to hear, almost any day, of the death of Reginald's father, who has about concluded his European trip, and must be on the point of returning home, especially since he has heard of the tragedy at his house and must

know how it has affected his family; and I would not be surprised to hear of an attempt on the life of Mr. Reginald within the next few weeks. Don't you understand, Sarah?"

"No, sir, I do not."

"Why, it is simply that there is a certain woman in the world whom, we know as Isabel Benton, who believes that she can impersonate Mercedes Danton so well that if her father, and mother, and brother were out of the way she would have no difficulty in deceiving the rest of the world.

"It is all very simple—awfully simple after what you have unconsciously revealed to me to-night—all of which I think I should have sensed before this, and which I would have done, had my mind been upon it.

"Go home now, Sarah. Be prepared to tell me all you know, in the morning. I can wait until then, but I charge you, if you would save the lives, not only of your mistress, but of your mistress' father, mother, and brother, keep no secrets back from me. It is no longer a question of one life, or two; it is a question of four lives—four human lives, which these fiends coldly intend to sacrifice to their greed for wealth and luxury."

As soon as Nick was alone, he repaired at once to the telephone and called up the favorite club of Reginald Danton.

"Mr. Danton has just gone out," he was told, "but he said that he would return in half an hour. No; he did not say where he was going, but I think over to the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel."

"All right," said Nick. "If he comes in ask him to wait for the gentleman who met him at the Thirty-third Street entrance of the Waldorf just before dark this evening."

For a moment, after he hung up the phone, the detective stood with his hands behind him, in deep thought; and then he hurried to his dressing room, from which, after a quarter of an hour he emerged, but so altered in appearance that he bore not the slightest resemblance to Nick Carter, as his friends and assistants knew him.

The detective was now, in every feature of his make-up, a typical Frenchman—a Boulevardier with a title or two to his name and ample time and money at his disposal. As he sauntered out upon the street, he murmured to himself:

"If Danton is at the Waldorf I will run across him there; if he is not, I can look him up at his club later."

When he arrived at the hotel he entered by the Thirty-third Street door and strolled slowly through the building toward the office. From there he made the rounds of the corridors and also peered into several of the rooms, but nowhere did he get a glimpse of the man he sought.

It was evident to him that if Reginald had indeed come to the Waldorf, he had already taken his departure.

Now, it so happens that the Waldorf is a hotel where one rarely takes the trouble to examine the register—indeed, it is rarely in evidence; and they keep three or four on tap, as it were, so that there is always one in which you may write your name while the others are in use by the bookkeepers.

Nevertheless, it so occurred, that as Nick was passing the desk in the office, one of the registers was lying idle on the counter near the registry clerk's window.

Without any object whatever in view, save only the thought of killing time, Nick paused, and, having turned the book around, drew it toward him.

He scanned the names without motive and without even comprehending those he read, idly turning the pages of the book backward, until suddenly he started—violently, for him, although the start was wholly inside and would not have been noticed by a person beside him—nevertheless he started, for, written upon the register in rather a bold but plainly a feminine chirography, he read the name: "Miss Mercedes Danton. Two maids."

He glanced hastily at the top of the page to discover the date of registry, and also made a mental note of the number of the suite placed against the names, and then he stepped away again and dropped into one of the big armchairs to think.

The date of the registry was exactly one week old, showing that the entry had been made the very day when Mercedes was supposed to have disappeared from her home, and Nick smiled when he thought how thoroughly a person may disappear from view in the very heart of New York by simply going to a hotel and by giving orders that you are not "in" to anybody while in town. It is only necessary after that to remain in one's room.

"Now here is a remarkable circumstance," mused Nick. "If I am right in my conjectures, the woman who is masquerading as Mercedes Danton is in this hotel at the present moment, and she has managed in some way so to hedge herself about that she has not the least fear of what may happen, even if her name is discovered on the register—which it is not likely to be, save through some such accident as mine. To prove that, I will go to the room clerk and inquire for her."

He sauntered up to the desk and asked:

"Is Miss Danton stopping here? Miss Mercedes Danton?"

"No. Gone. Went away a week ago," replied the clerk shortly, and without raising his eyes. But Nick was satisfied. He returned to his chair and reseated himself.

"It is quite evident," he mused, "that I have received the stereotyped answer prepared for any person who happens to inquire for Mercedes Danton. It is also equally evident to me that she is at this moment in this hotel—that is, the woman who represents herself to be Miss Danton, and that instead of wasting my time in running after her brother, I had better look into this matter here and now."

He crossed the corridor to the locality of the pneumatic tubes which are used as mediums of communication with the upper floors, and asked one of the clerks there to tell him the exact location of the suite he wanted to find, and then he made his way through the building to what is known as the Waldorf side of the hotel and so ascended in the elevator.

Having stepped out at the floor he had desired, he sauntered carelessly through the corridor, passed the door of the suite which had been assigned to the woman who had registered under the name of Mercedes Danton, continued on his way to the far end of the hall, and then retraced his steps.

Then, having taken note of the number of the room directly opposite the one that was occupied by the woman he quested, he descended again to the ground floor and went out of the building.

He hurried at once to his own house, and, without altering his disguise, for it served as well as any for

the work he had in view, he hastily packed a grip that was liberally pasted over with tags and labels.

Nick Carter had determined upon one of the boldest moves of his career, as will soon be seen—a move, too, for which many of his critics might be inclined to censure him, since it involved entrance to a woman's room without her permission—but, yet, he was convinced that the end he had in view justified the means that were necessary to accomplish it.

Even when he began the packing of his grip, he hesitated; but assured as he was that four lives were in immediate peril, he cast his scruples to the winds and continued with his preparations.

The articles with which he supplied his grip, were simply such as he might find it necessary to use in the work he had to do, and in a surprisingly short space of time from the moment he entered his house he left it again—but not, however, before he had made use of the telephone to call up the manager of the Waldorf and ask if he could be accommodated with a certain room, and he gave the number of the one directly opposite the entrance to the suite that was charged against the name of Mercedes Danton.

The reply to his request was all that he could desire, and, accordingly, he returned, grip in hand, to the Waldorf, without delay.

Fifteen minutes after entering the hotel, he was assigned to the room he sought. He had his grip sent up at once.

The time was as yet early in the evening—barely ten o'clock—and as at least two hours must elapse before he could commence operations as he had planned them, he determined to walk over to the club which Reginald Danton most frequented, and, perhaps, in that manner kill two birds with one stone—that is, see him and give him the warning he had intended to convey before he discovered the name of his sister on the register, and so been forced to alter his plans.

But even while he was standing near the desk, turning over his plans for the night in his mind, he heard the voice of Reginald behind him, and saw him saunter through the corridor in the direction of the café, in company with two others.

"Good," said Nick to himself, and he followed them, noticed where they seated themselves, and then, returning, sent a boy to tell Reginald that a gentleman wished to speak with him at the desk.

Reginald appeared in a moment and stood looking vacantly around him in search of a familiar face, but, seeing none, was about to return to his friends when Nick touched him on the shoulder.

Reginald Danton wheeled instantly and confronted Nick. A frown appeared on his face, and was then succeeded by a smile, for, after all, he thought, this stranger might be the person who had sent for him.

"You wished to speak to me?" asked Reginald.

"Yes," replied Nick, in his natural tones, although in a low voice. "Tut-tut, Danton, don't look so surprised. You recognize my voice, of course."

"Yes; but it is the only thing about you that I do recognize," said Danton.

"Naturally, since it is all I wished you to do. But stroll with me through the corridor for a moment. I want to talk to you."

CHAPTER VIII.

UP AGAINST IT IN EITHER CASE.

"I was never so astonished in my life," said Danton, as they walked arm in arm together along the hotel corridor. "Of course, I have heard that you could step up and hold conversations with your best friends without once giving them a chance to recognize you, but I never believed it, you know. I always thought that sort of thing was what the boys call 'Sherlock-Holmesing,' don't you know. Very pleasant to read about, but not an element of real life. Just speak again, won't you, for I am not sure yet that you are really Nick Carter; I'm not, really."

"I'm not Nick Carter, Danton—at least, not for the present. I am the Marquis de St. Cyr. At least, that is the name by which I have registered on the books of the hotel."

"And why, may I ask?"

"Rather, for the moment, let me ask the questions. Are you especially addicted to the two gentlemen who are with you?"

"Eh?"

"Who is with you?"

"Oh. Nobody in particular. They are only time killers. The fact is I have been so upset since that episode of the carriage, when I thought I saw my sister, that I cannot get the idea out of my head that she is here in this hotel. I was glad of any excuse for sitting around here for an hour or so."

"Even though you sat in the café where there is not the slightest possibility that you will see her if she is here?" asked Nick.

"Yes; even so. Oh, I haven't the faintest idea that I will see her again, you know."

"Let me ask you, Danton, if, when you use the pronoun 'her,' you mean your sister, or the woman you saw in the automobile and whom you thought was your sister?"

"You seem to be mightily well convinced that she was not Mercedes."

"I am as positive as I can be without having established the truth of my statement."

"Well, whether the woman I saw was Mercedes or somebody else, I cannot get it out of my head that she is here in this hotel."

"She is here in this hotel."

"Ah! You know, then?"

"Yes."

"How did you find out?"

"Never mind that now. Come, let us return to your friends. You may introduce me as an old friend from Paris, the Marquis de St. Cyr—and then, as soon as it is politely convenient, I want you to shake them and give your attention to me. I have suddenly determined to initiate you into real detective work to-night, and right here in this hotel."

"Eh? Do you mean that you want me to help you?"

"Just that, if you are game and care to do so. If you think I may surely depend upon your discretion, and—sand."

"Sure thing, Carter! You may depend upon both."

It was midnight when they had parted from the friends of Reginald Danton and had repaired to the room to which Nick had been assigned; and then, in a low tone, but with great earnestness, Nick outlined what he intended to do and the manner in which Danton could assist him.

"To begin with, Danton," he said, "you had scarcely left my house before Sarah Kearney put in an appearance, and from her I have gleaned enough of the facts connected with the departure of Mercedes from home, to assure me that she has been made the victim—or rather one of the intended victims—of a very deep plot which includes your whole family. Then, my young friend, I was seeking you in order to warn you to be especially on your guard, when quite by accident I discovered that Mercedes Danton and two maids are registered here at this hotel. In fact, they are at this moment occupying the suite that is directly opposite this one."

"Gee whiz! Is that so?"

"Quite so. Now listen to me quietly and patiently, and I will tell you how I have sized up the circumstances connected with the events that have happened in your family lately—and what I want you to do to help me tonight."

"Go ahead, old man. What is it?"

"In the first place you must understand that the man has never been born into the world who is always right; I am not an exception to the rule, and while I believe in the theories I have worked out from what has been told to me, there is always the possibility that I may be wrong. Now, Danton, it is highly important that I should enter that room oposite us, and before morning——"

"Eh? What the dev——"

"Wait. I must know before daylight if the woman in that room is your sister, or an impostor. If she is really your sister, then there is nothing more for me to do on the premises, save to await the morning and then send up my card in the usual way in the hope that she will receive me in the interests of her brother."

"Well; and if she is not——"

"If she is not your sister—why, then, I know already who she is, and I will not be long in determining how to act."

"If she is not my sister, who is she?"

"Isabel Benton."

"The devil you say!"

"Well, if I am right in my conjectures, a sort of a she devil, I grant you."

"But, I mean——"

"I know exactly what you mean; better than you do yourself—but don't let us get away from the main subject until I have finished what I have to say on that point."

"All right. Go ahead."

"Well, then, in plain English, if by any possibility I am mistaken, and the woman in that room is Mercedes Danton, I tell you frankly that I would rather be shot than to enter there without her permission. You see——"

"Wait half a minute, Carter. I want to ask you a question."

"All right. What is it?"

"This: If it were any other woman on top of the great green earth, not my sister—any other woman in the world except Mercedes Danton, would you feel any hesitation about entering her room, if you considered the act as a necessary part of your duty?"

Nick looked calmly into his companion's eyes and replied slowly:

"No; I don't think I should hesitate."

"Good! I understand you, Carter, better than you think. Now another question: If Mercedes Danton were not in question, you would not even stop to consider that your deductions in this case are correct, would you?"

"No; I don't think I should."

"That's all right, Nick, old man. It would seem that I was not so far wrong as one might suppose when I teased Mercedes until she was angry.

"But we'll drop all that now. You had got as far as saying that you would rather be shot than enter that room under certain circumstances. Go ahead from there."

"If by any chance your sister is in that room, why, it would be no great crime for her brother to enter it without her knowledge, just to ascertain if she is really there, while, for me to do so, would be——"

"Terrible, eh? Let it go at that. But, I say; do you thing for a single moment that I'm going to burgle that room?"

"That is exactly what I expect you to do."

"It strikes me that the shoe is on the other foot now, with a vengeance."

"How so?"

"Why, this way: If I burgle the room, and it is my sister's room, no harm is done. If I burgle it and it is not my sister's room, then the devil is to pay."

Nick laughed outright.

"If you enter the room and my sister is there," continued Danton, "you are up against it, and if I enter the room and my sister is not there, I am up against it."

Nick Carter's face suddenly became grave.

"We are wasting precious time, Reginald," he said. "Now I want you to listen while I tell you a story."

"All right, old chap. Go ahead."

"Carry your mind back to the time when you first engaged Paul Rogers as your valet."

"Hello! Harking back to that, eh?"

"Yes. Be serious now, for it is a very grave and serious matter."

"Well?"

"How was he first brought to your notice so that you were inclined to take him into your service?"

"I think he was recommended to me through Orizaba; through some friend of his, if I remember the incident correctly."

"I had scarcely hoped for so good a reply as that."

"What do you mean?"

"Did Orizaba tell you that he personally knew Rogers?"

"No; I remember distinctly that he assured me he had never seen him."

"Now, in the light of all that occurred later—the murder of Orizaba and the written confession of Rogers, together with his flight, little things have gone out of your mind. I want to know if in the beginning of Rogers' employment in your service, you ever noticed any sign that passed between him and Orizaba by which you might be led to suppose that they were not unknown to each other?"

"No. I never saw a thing; but then I would be the last person in the world to see such a thing, even if it had existed."

"Now, one more question and then I will tell my story: Did it ever occur to you that Rogers and the maid, Isabel Benton, were anything more than mere fellow servants in your household?"

"Sure! He was dead stuck on her. I bantered him about it often—when I was half full."

"Good. Now I will tell the story."

"I hope it is as good as the introduction is exciting."

"Good or not, it is logical. It is wholly made up from my practice of putting two and two together, but the more I have thought about it, the more convinced I have become that it is correct."

CHAPTER IX.

THE PLOT FOR MANY MILLIONS.

"You have told me nothing of the real relation of Ramon Orizaba to your family, save that he was a distant cousin," began Nick slowly, "and it is not necessary, in order to carry out my theory, that you should do so. The point is that he was a relation, however distant, and on your mother's side, since you have told me that she is of Spanish descent."

"Correct. He was——"

"Never mind; we will call him a distant cousin. I think, Danton, if he had shaved off his mustache and the pointed beard he wore, you would have speedily discovered that there was a strong facial resemblance between that man and your mother."

"Oh, yes. She spoke of it often; and so, for that matter, did he."

"As little as I saw of him, the resemblance was plain to me. Now there was another person in that house who bore a striking resemblance to Orizaba."

"Do you mean my sister?"

"No. It was not noticeable in her case, I think, although the person whom I am about to mention as looking like him, also resembled your sister. I mean Isabel Benton."

"By Jove, you are right!"

"My theory tells me, in short, that Isabel Benton and Ramon Orizaba were brother and sister."

Danton whistled softly to himself.

"It goes still farther," continued Nick. "We will say that the relation between Orizaba and your mother did exist, in fact, and that thus far he was not an impostor.'

"Yes."

"Beginning at that point, we must go back to the time when Orizaba first discovered that the relationship existed, and that his American relatives were rich.

"We will picture him as—what he doubtless was—a sort of half adventurer, half gentleman, who lived by his wits, as he did not cease to do after he made the acquaintance of your mother.

"Discovering, we will say, that he was blessed with rich relatives in America, he made himself known to them, and, by his adroitness, won himself into a position of recognition. It appears, and quite plainly as you know, that your mother and sister supplied him with an allowance out of their own funds. Your sister did this to please her mother, and your mother did it for the honor of her family—because he was a blood relation, however distant, and she would not consent that he should incur the contempt of her husband and son."

"I guess that is about right, Nick."

"The sums with which they supplied him were, however, not sufficient for his needs, and, being aware of your proverbial carelessness in money matters, he did not hesitate to forge an occasional check in your name.

"This, I think your sister knew about; perhaps your mother also knew it. It was the fear that he would repeat that act too often and so be discovered, which led your sister to give him more money, and often—for I find through Sarah that she did so.

"Now—you have intimated, in the past, that Orizaba had the temerity to make advances for the hand of Mercedes, in marriage. That is the real reason why you hated him, for, otherwise you would have liked him. You have told me yourself that everybody did like him—that he had a way of ingratiating himself into the good graces of everybody."

"It is true, too."

"Mercedes doubtless gave him to understand that there was no hope for him in that direction, and so he turned his attention to another matter—one that had presented itself to him from the first moment when he met your sister, but one which he did not seriously consider until he knew that there was no hope that she would ever consent to be his wife.

"But, then, he recalled the fact that he had a sister—and what is more important, that the ties of blood had harked back as it will sometimes strangely do, so that with a little assistance from the arts of dress and of making up, there was a resemblance between them sufficiently marked so that under proper conditions one might readily pass for the other. It remained, therefore, only necessary to bring about those conditions.

"We will say that he communicated with his sister. That they met and the whole plan and plot was outlined between them. That she was brought out of obscurity somewhere, and, after some necessary coaching, was introduced into your home in the capacity of maid to Mercedes.

"It was a simple matter for her to dress so that the resemblance to her mistress should be as little noticeable as possible. The very accomplishment she wished to make use of later on, was covered with every art she could employ, so that it was hardly to be seen at all while she was in the house, save at rare intervals.

"One of those rare intervals I know about, as well as the fact that she delighted to practice in the part of masquerading as Mercedes. Sarah surprised her once, dressed in your sister's clothing, and standing before a glass engaged in studying her part, in character.

"Now, we have that much, and we will take a step backward again.

"After the murder of Orizaba, you know I went through his papers very thoroughly. I found the story of the Nemesis, as you know, and Rogers' letter developed the fact that he was that interesting character. But here is a nice little point in the plot—or, rather, two very nice points: Orizaba did not suspect that Rogers was the Nemesis who had been pursuing him for so long a time, for the reason that Rogers was all the time the husband of Orizaba's sister, Isabel. Don't you see?"

"Not quite. There are wheels within wheels there."

"Very well, we will say that ten years ago Rogers took the trail of Orizaba, intending to kill him. In pursuing him, he encountered Isabel, the sister of his intended victim. He fell in love with Isabel, and married her.

"Having done that, he posed thereafter as the fond brother-in-law, while in reality he was the Nemesis who was bleeding Orizaba all the while, and who had sworn some day to have his life. Why, we do not know, and it does not matter; but that is why, try as he might, Orizaba

could never discover the identity of the man who pursued him.

"Now, let us take another step backward. We will say that one day Orizaba confided his plot to Rogers; that he told him of the strong likeness between Mercedes Danton and Isabel. With their heads together, it was an easy matter for those two men to work out the plot by which, ultimately, they were together to enjoy all the millions that your own father has amassed, and which one day are intended to be divided between you and Mercedes. They were not working for one million, but for a hundred millions. Think of it, Danton; it was a game worth playing, and worthy of the brains they put into it."

"By Jove, Nick! But how——"

"Wait. Rogers was introduced into your service as a valet, in order to study the lay of the land, so to speak, before he would consent that his wife should become involved.

"Later, his wife, Orizaba's sister, the woman whom we know as Isabel Benton, was brought forward as maid to Mercedes. The mine was laid. It only remained for Isabel to study her part until she had it learned to perfection, and then to fire the mine."

"But, I say, Nick, you don't mean to say that she believed she could fool me—to say nothing of my father and mother—do you?"

"Certainly not."

"Then how——"

"You, as well as your father and mother were condemned to death."

"Good Heaven!"

"With you three out of the way it would be an easy matter to deceive others. When the little matter of the quarrel, which amounted to nothing, occurred between you and Mercedes, Isabel overheard it, doubtless, and as the time was ready to act, she acted.

"She had already started her warfare against your mother. You say you thought your mother was poisoned by something she had eaten. I have no doubt that she was, only I have many doubts that it was accidental. The poison was somehow administered by Isabel, and in getting your mother out of the house, she did what she wanted to do; for she opened the opportunity for her own disappearance after which there were other ways in which you and your mother were to be gotten rid of after some approved plan which offered small chance of detection.

"Isabel was establishing an alibi for herself, as well as for your pseudo sister. You would have had another Cadillac needle jabbed into your back, on the street somewhere, your mother would have been poisoned again while she is in Newport, and your father—well, he may or he may not get home alive. Let us hope that he will; that the time is not yet ripe to play their act upon him, and if our work to-night is good, I hope we can prevent the further working of the plot against you."

"But, my dear Nick. How——"

"Hush! Don't interrupt me yet. There is absolutely nothing that we can do to prevent the happening of the things I have mentioned, except what we have elected to do to-night. Now let us take one more step backward.

"We will say that we are almost at the time for the culmination of the plot. We will say that we can look in upon a reverie of Rogers wherein he cogitates upon the mightiest stroke of all. He hates Orizaba. More than that, he fears him. Still more, with Orizaba out of the way there will be one less person to enjoy the millions of your father when they shall have been won.

"Still more yet, there is a chance that by murdering Orizaba, he can throw suspicion upon you, Danton, and this he decides to do. That later he changed his mind on that point is one of the psychological puzzles of the human mind. I won't pretend to answer that, unless it was the thought that he could still further divert suspicion from himself in the final crimes, if, by chance, suspicion should ever fall upon him.

"In putting Orizaba out of the way, Isabel was both neutral and passive. There had never been affection between them, nor did she delight in the thought that her brother would be master of that future in which she wished to be the queen.

"There! That is the story I have woven from the somewhat tangled thread provided by Sarah Kearney. Now I come down to the night of the disappearance of Mercedes.

"Sarah put her to bed as usual, Saturday night. Sunday morning, Sarah was sent away upon a cooked-up errand. When she returned, the baggage had been taken from the house, and her mistress, as she supposed, was in the act of driving away in the limousine. As a matter of fact, Reginald, it was Isabel who was inside the limousine, posing as Mercedes, and it was a woman who had been introduced into the house to do hemming on linen who was acting the part of Isabel."

"Where, then, was Mercedes?"

"I can only guess at the reply, but there is no doubt in my mind that she had been drugged and taken secretly from the house during Saturday night, and—I say, Danton, the registry downstairs shows two maids. What if one of those maids is your sister, still under the influence of drugs? What if, after all, she is in that room across the hall?"

CHAPTER X.

THE PLOTTERS BROUGHT TO BAY.

It was past one o'clock when the detective had finished his story, and as he brought it to an end, he glanced at his watch, then shut it to with a snap and announced that it was time to act.

"I know the plan of the interior of this hotel quite well," he said, to Danton, "and it will be comparatively easy for me to unlock the door so that you can gain admittance to those rooms.

"There are five rooms in the suite, and I merely wish you to satisfy yourself that Mercedes is there, or is not there, and then to return to me to report. I will do the rest."

"But, suppose they should hear me?"

"Then the only thing for you to do is to make your escape and to dart into this room as quickly as you can.

"Come; are you ready? Here; let me adjust this wig and beard, so that if you should be seen you will not be known. So. Come on."

Nick opened the door, and, after directing Danton to remain where he was until he was ready for him to proceed, crossed the hall and applied his marvelous picklock to the door.

It was a matter of only a moment for him to spring back the lock, and gently to push the door ajar, in the meantime having assured himself by a quick glance up and down the hall that there was no immediate fear of interruption.

As the door upon which he was working swung open not more than half an inch, he could hear voices proceeding from the room which adjoined that one, and he could see, also, by the light which reflected into the room before him, that it was itself unoccupied.

The voice that had arrested his attention was a man's voice, and, turning, he made a hasty gesture toward Danton to remain where he was, and then stepped boldly through, closing the door behind him. The presence of a man in the room and the instant recognition of the tones of that man's voice, had driven all thought of the delicacy of his undertaking from his mind at once.

For Nick Carter, to hear a voice once, was always to remember it, and the instant those tones fell upon his ear, he knew that he was in the presence of the master conspirator, in short, that the man, Rogers, was at that very moment at his mercy.

Having closed the door gently, he dropped upon the floor and crawled forward until he could peer through a crack between the folding doors which connected the two rooms, and he almost exclaimed aloud when his eyes lighted upon the scene thus exposed to his view.

At the first glance it seemed almost as if Mercedes herself was seated there, conversing with Rogers, so exact a copy had she managed to produce of the young woman she had plotted to impersonate. But even as Nick took in the details of her appearance, she spoke, and she did so with the voice of Isabel Benton.

"Oh, no," she was saying. "I will experience no difficulty in getting her away from this hotel. Give yourself no uneasiness on that score. I have already made every arrangement. The doctor has given his opinion, the management of the hotel is ready to assist me in taking her out as quietly as possible. They are no more anxious to make an exhibition of a sick guest than I am of a sick maid; and Paul, her own brother, would not know her, she is so wasted and changed.

"I don't know what the drug is that you gave me to administer to her, but, whatever it is, it has done its work well. Mercedes Danton, the real, goes out of existence to-morrow when we ship her off to Canada. After that, you can put her out of existence in fact, at your own sweet pleasure. I will wash my hands of it for good and all then."

"And your part here? What will you do?"

"Oh, I'll play my part all right. Don't worry about me. You say the servant whom you have 'fixed' at the house in Newport, where the old lady is staying, will do her work this week, and that Mrs. Danton is too ill to travel here now. Well, that means that I have nothing to fear from that source; and Danton père—if your plans do not fail in regard to him——"

"They cannot fail. He will die on shipboard on the way over, of apoplexy, or of something that will look much like it. They haven't time to hold autopsies on ocean steamers. I'll take care of that. The steward who is to put him out of the way has worked for me before; he will not fail. But what of the son?"

"You leave the son to me. He has just twenty-four hours more to live, and then, pouf! He goes out of existence. Thus all the obstacles are removed. Thus we will come into the millions."

"You are a great actress, Isabel. You play the part superbly. Even now—here—to me—you look it thoroughly, from tip to toe."

"Play the part? It is thrice easier than it was to play the maid. That was hard. But, come. You must be going."

Nick waited to hear no more after that, but he turned and glided back to the door, and in another moment was again in the hall, with it closed and locked behind him.

With a hasty word of warning and instruction to Danton, who retreated within the room, Nick sauntered down the corridor a few steps, waiting till the door of the suite supposed to be occupied by Mercedes Danton and her maids should open to permit the departure of Paul Rogers—and he had not long to wait.

When the man came out into the hall, and closed the door behind him, Nick was not ten feet away from him, and, as Rogers, after one sharp glance in his direction, turned to hasten in the opposite direction, Nick quickened his step so that in a moment he was close beside the conspirator and murderer.

He seemed to be in the act of passing Rogers, when suddenly he turned in his track.

His arms shot out and the fingers of one hand seized upon Rogers' throat, effectually shutting off all hope of his crying out or otherwise giving an alarm. With the other hand, the detective seized him around the body and then, with a leap, he hurried him toward the open door of his own room where Danton was standing in the doorway awaiting him.

The whole thing occurred so quickly that five seconds had not elapsed from the instant when Rogers came out of the room opposite, before he was safely behind closed doors in Nick Carter's room, with irons upon his wrists and ankles and a gag thrust into his mouth.

"This is the luckiest night's work I ever did in my life," said Nick, looking down upon his captive, who was glaring up at him with fierce eyes, but who was utterly helpless nevertheless.

"I see that you do not know me, Paul Rogers," he said. "Perhaps, however, you will know this gentleman;" and he brought Danton forward where the prisoner could see him.

"The game is up, Rogers," continued Nick. "I think I can assure you that Mr. Danton's father will not die of apoplexy on board the ship which is to bring him over here; also that his mother in Newport will not be poisoned this week, and also that Reginald will live somewhat more than twenty-four hours more. Neither do I think that Mercedes Danton, the real, as your wife correctly calls her, will take that little trip to Canada."

"What the devil does it all mean?" asked Danton, almost beside himself with curiosity.

"It means," replied Nick, "that when I opened the door opposite, I heard Rogers' voice inside the room, so I thought that instead of sending you there to reconnoiter, I would do the thing myself.

"I happened, fortunately, to surprise a heart-to-heart talk between this chap and Isabel, in which, in a very few words, they betrayed the whole plot, almost exactly as I outlined it to you. And, by the way, Reginald, I

don't blame you for supposing that Isabel was your sister when you saw her in front of the hotel in the carriage. I would have believed the same had I seen her instead of you.

"Now, I want you to sit here with our gentle acquaintance while I go down and interview the management of the hotel. This is one of the circumstances which they like to manage in their own way, and when I tell them that it need not be known that anything has occurred in the hotel, there will be no difficulty in getting our prisoners to police headquarters without delay."

"But where is Mercedes? Where is my sister? Has anything happened to her? You have not told me that yet, Nick?"

"To be sure I haven't; but do you suppose that if anything had happened to her, I would be almost joking with this brute here on the floor? Wait, Danton. She is under the influence of drugs, and is, doubtless, quite ill; but I think we will soon bring her out of that condition."

* * * * * * *

Half an hour later there was a sharp summons upon the door of the suite opposite the room where Nick Carter had related the story to Reginald Danton.

Presently, after the summons had been repeated a second and a third time, there came a voice from the other side, inquiring who was there.

"A telegram," replied the hotel detective, whereupon he was told to wait a moment, and presently the door was partly opened and the face of Isabel—it was uncannily like the face of Mercedes—appeared in the opening.

But she had no time to ask questions, for the door being ajar thus far, was quickly pushed wide open by the men outside, and almost before the woman was thoroughly awake, she found herself a prisoner.

* * * * * * *

It was broad daylight, in the same suite of rooms at the hotel.

Mercedes Danton, pale as a ghost, but seemingly more beautiful than ever, was lying on the couch near the window so that the cooling breeze of the June morning could fan her brow. Seated beside her and holding her hand in his, was her brother, and standing near them, looking down with untold pleasure and satisfaction in his eyes, was the great detective, Nick Carter.

"How much we owe to you, Mr. Carter," she said to him, lifting her matchless eyes until they rested upon his face with a glance that was almost a caress.

"To me?" he replied, smiling. "Say, rather, to yourself."

"How to me?" she inquired.

Nick turned away without answering, and Reginald smiled upon both his sister and his friend.

"How to me?" she repeated, looking at her brother for a reply.

"Why," he said, smiling, "because everybody who knows you, loves you, Mercedes. Even I, your brother, love you."

THE END.

"The Millionaire's Nemesis; or, Paul Rogers' Oath of Vengeance," is the title of the story that you will find in the next issue of this weekly, No. 65, out December 6th. It will tell of the escape from the law of the murderer whom we have known as Paul Rogers. His real character will be revealed, and the wonderful plotting between himself and the beautiful Isabel, against the life and happiness of the beautiful Mercedes Danton and her brother, Reginald, will be unfolded. Nick Carter has often said that he never had to do with a worse villain, and one more accomplished in crime, than Paul Rogers.

THE HEAD-HUNTER;

Or, Steve Manley's Secret Mission.

By ALDEN F. BRADSHAW.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

In a trunk, which is found floating in the river at Pennville, is discovered the decapitated body of Captain Ben Hogan. Steve Manley, a bright young detective attached to Chief O'Mara's staff, gets to work on the case at once.

CHAPTER III.

STEVE'S SECRET MISSION.

At that moment the coroner arrived upon the scene, and Chief O'Mara waved Leary back among the crowd, ending his inquiries for the time being, and presently returning to his office at headquarters. Before noon, however, after the body had been removed to the morgue, the reports of the score of detectives set at work upon the case began to come in, and the investigation took a more definite shape.

Yet the mystery was as dark as ever.

From all that could then be learned, Captain Ben Hogan was a stranger in Pennville. He had taken a room at Leary's between three and four months before, where he lived quietly, almost like a recluse at times, and had made no intimate friends.

He was said to be a man of nearly sixty years, and claimed to have been at various times the master of vessels in the merchant service between the States and the Orient.

This fact, which was afterward substantiated, would have indicated that he was a man of some means; yet an examination of his effects in his room at Leary's revealed that he was without money, unless the motive for the crime had been that of robbery, and his property stolen.

There was no evidence of this except the fact that his trunk and bureau were in a state of great confusion; but, as this disorder was characteristic of the entire room and closet, as well as all of his belongings, it definitely signified nothing.

On the man's person was found only a key to the room, a small sum of money, and a cheap silver watch.

The glass crystal of the latter was broken, the fragments still remaining in the case, and the watch had stopped at precisely half past twelve. Yet it still was partly wound, and it was plainly evident that the watch had been broken during the assault in which Hogan had been killed.

"This should establish the precise time when the crime was committed," said Chief O'Mara, when discussing the case with several of his detectives that afternoon. "The question is, where and by whom was it done? It seems impossible that the man could have been murdered in broad daylight and out of doors, without there having been some witness to the crime."

"He certainly was out of doors most of the morning," rejoined Detective Morrissey; "for I have traced his movements until nearly noon."

"Run the facts over once more."

"He left Leary's before eleven o'clock, sir, and was seen going down Second Street. Half an hour later, or about half past eleven, he was sitting on the landing next to Watson's, watching the barges hauling up the stream."

"Was he alone?"

"Yes, sir," replied the detective. "Furthermore, I learned that it was quite a habit of his to sit about the water front by himself, watching the boats on the river. Yet he is said to have been a rather grim and silent old chap, and seldom had words with others. That is what was said of him at Leary's, also."

"Could you trace his movements after he left the landing this morning?"

"Not continuously, sir. When last noticed on the landing, it was close upon noon, and I can find no person who saw him leave. But about quarter past twelve he was seen hurrying through K Street, five blocks from Leary's, and that was the last seen of him, so far as I can learn."

"Was he walking in the direction of Leary's?"

"Yes, sir."

"And hurrying?"

"The party who saw him is a saloon keeper, who was standing outside of his door when Hogan passed. He states that Hogan then was moving as fast as he could, with his game foot, and went around the corner of K Street."

"Evidently bound home?"

"It would seem so, chief; and I can find no person that saw him after the saloon man."

"The fact that he was hurrying," said Chief O'Mara decidedly, "indicates that he had some unusual incentive. It is not like a man, maimed as he was, to hurry without some serious occasion. Have all the tenements in that locality been visited?"

"Yes, sir; and the men are still engaged in a search for such a room and table as has been described. There has nothing come of it yet, sir."

Nor did anything come of it until several hours later.

The noon edition of the papers contained long stories of the affair, and before the day was gone the main features of the tragedy were generally known, and most of the city was in a ferment of excitement over the startling mystery.

If not for robbery, why had the man been murdered?

Where and by whom could the crime have been committed?

What had been the object in removing the body to Watson's landing?

And why had the victim's head been removed, when there was ample room in the trunk for it to have been left there?

These were the questions every man was asking his neighbor, yet to none of which a reasonable answer could be returned.

One of the last to report that afternoon at the office of the chief was young Steve Manley, and the moment he entered, Chief O'Mara knew by his face that he had made some startling discovery.

"What is it, Steve?" he quickly demanded, signing for him to close the door.

Steve's shoes were covered with mud, and he looked tired and dragged, yet he replied with his usual enthusiasm.

"I've found a room like the one you're looking for, Chief O'Mara."

"Where is it located?" asked Chief O'Mara, with quick interest.

"Down in P Street, sir, next street to the one Leary's place is on."

"In a tenement?"

"No, sir; it's in back of a drug store."

"Who runs the store?"

"An old duffer by the name of Wagstaff."

"I know of the man; he's a half-crazy old fellow, who lives alone."

"I guess that's right, sir, for I have been looking him up pretty sharp."

"What have you learned? Tell me just what you have been doing?"

Chief O'Mara knew that Steve's boyish methods were not at all conventional, yet the fact that his young detective instinct had resulted in many clever discoveries led Chief O'Mara to give him considerable leeway.

"It was like this, Chief O'Mara," Steve eagerly explained. "I run on a guy who had seen the old man stumping through K Street this morning."

"A saloon keeper?"

"Yes, sir."

"I've heard about him. What did you do then?"

"I went piping off all the houses I could look into between there and Leary's."

"Searching for the room described?"

"Yes, sir," nodded Steve. "But I didn't get onto anything till I struck P Street. Then I thought I'd go into the drug place and ask the old man if he'd seen anything of the one as was killed."

"What did he say?"

"I couldn't get into the shop, sir. The door was locked. Then I sneaked through the alley next to the place, and looked in the back window. It's a little room where the drug man lives by himself."

"Do you mean that that was the room you discovered?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are the walls whitewashed?"

"They were once, sir; but it's most worn off now," said Steve. "And on one side, just about the height of the trunk, there's a line worn where the white is all barked off the boards."

"As if a trunk had been standing against the wall?"

"That's the way it looks, sir."

"What else is there in the room?"

"There's a table about the same size as the oilcloth found in the trunk, and it's now got a new cloth, nearly like the old one."

Though Steve's disclosures were decidedly startling, Chief O'Mara was not one to betray excitement.

"You have done well," he said simply. "What else is there in the room?"

"Only a stove, sir, and some common pieces of furniture."

"Did you attempt to enter?"

"I tried the window and the back door, but they were locked."

"Could you see any further evidence that the crime was committed there?"

"None at all, sir."

"Had the floor been recently washed?"

"Judging from the looks, Chief O'Mara, I'd say it hadn't been washed for a year," laughed Steve. "And I don't think the man was killed there, sir."

"Why not?"

"Because, when I couldn't get in, I made it a point to find out where Wagstaff had gone."

"Did you learn?"

"Easy, sir. I asked a bit of a girl who lives near by, and she said he was back in the hills, looking for plants what he makes bitters of. She said he'd been away early every day for a week, and came home along about dark."

"Was he away on one of these expeditions yesterday?"

"That's what the girl said. Then I thought I'd best make sure it was so, and I found out which way he'd gone, and started out after him."

"Did you find him?"

"Less'n an hour ago, sir," nodded Steve. "I met him coming over the Point bridge, with a big bag of weeds over his shoulder."

"He had been after herbs," said Chief O'Mara, gazing thoughtfully at the floor for several moments.

"Yes, sir; that's what the girl said he was after."

"Did she say he was absent all of yesterday?"

"Yes, sir, all day."

"And is that why you think he may not have committed the crime?"

"That's the way I looked at it, sir."

"Yet the man may have taken this very method to avert suspicion," said the chief shortly. "Do you know where he is at present?"

"He was in his shop half an hour ago, sir."

"Alone?"

"Yes, sir; he was sorting over the weeds he'd brought in, and had 'em dumped on the floor of the shop."

Chief O'Mara glanced out of the window. It was approaching evening, and dusk was falling.

"Have you had your supper, Steve?" he presently turned and demanded.

Steve thought he saw a chance to get another important assignment, and, though he had eaten nothing since noon, that became a secondary interest.

"I have had all I want, sir."

"Then I wish you to undertake a mission for me to-night."

"I'm ready, sir."

"You say this place is in the neighborhood of Leary's?"

"They're near back to back, sir."

"I want you to go down there, then, and watch this man Wagstaff and see what he does to-night. Keep yourself out of sight, and, above all things, out of his clutches, and see if he has any communication with Leary's lodgers. Can you do this, do you think?"

"Dead easy, Chief O'Mara!" cried Steve eagerly. "Sure, a job like that is a snap."

"Set about it, then, and report here in the morning."

CHAPTER IV.

STEVE MEETS WITH A MISHAP.

It was dark when Steve Manley arrived in P Street, and approached the shop occupied by Wagstaff, the apothecary.

It was one of the most inferior localities in the neighborhood of the river.

The buildings and innumerable dwellings were wrecks of the past, with tenement houses predominating, into which were crowded an army of impoverished people glad of any shelter whatsoever.

Numerous alleys abounded on every side.

The streets were thronged nightly with noisy collections of idle men and women, while squallid, half-dressed children, screaming at play or at fighting, raced the neighborhood until midnight.

Two out of every three shops were rum shops, and for a half dozen blocks in either direction a more degenerate and tumble-down district would have been hard to find in any city of the globe.

It was decidedly a locality in which such a crime as that committed might have been expected. Half the people who lived there either were criminals, or willing to be if the crime would show a profit; and their sympathies were much less with the police than the offender, whom nine out of ten would have helped to escape an officer.

Throughout this broad area was a labyrinth of dark passages, with gloomy courts and alleys, and innumerable back yards and tumble-down stables.

For a stranger to have ventured after dark into this hive of wretchedness and vice was like taking his life in his hands.

Yet old Zenas Wagstaff, the name upon a faded sign above his shop door, had occupied his present quarters for nearly forty years. Amid such surroundings, it is not strange that he should have developed into an ugly, crabbed, and suspicious old man; for he had been jeered at by ragged urchins, and made the butt of their vicious pranks, until his head fairly had been turned against them, and he hated a boy as the devil hates holy water.

It was through the dingy street window of this man's shop that Steve paused to gaze that evening, just as the city clocks were on the stroke of eight.

"I'm on time," he said to himself. "There's the old fossil, now."

The light in the narrow shop was dim, only that of a smoky oil lamp which hung over the counter.

On the shelves was an array of dusty bottles, in wrappers faded with age; while scattered still upon the floor, as if to dry, was fully a bushel of herbs and plants which the man had brought in an hour or two before.

At the back of the room was a narrow door which led into the kitchen. Between the two rooms was a narrow stairway leading to a single chamber and loft on the floor above.

In the midst of his dismal surroundings, with his bowed figure hanging over the counter, stood Wagstaff himself.

He was reading a paper spread open before him, with his sallow hands resting on the counter on either side of the open sheet.

His thin features were pinched and drawn, his parchmentlike skin wore a greenish pallor, the steel spectacles on his hooked nose were trembling visibly, as the man's head shook with suppressed excitement.

A more vivid picture of subdued fear, distress, and agitation could not be imagined.

Steve guessed what the matter was with him.

"He's reading up the crime," he said to himself. "He's just onto it that the murder has been discovered. Holy smoke! he looks as if he'd seen the ghost of the man himself."

Wagstaff had suddenly thrown back his head, till the light fell full on his ghastly face.

Then he fiercely crushed and crumpled the paper he had been reading, and stood for a moment like one in a riot of wild conjectures, with his staring eyes fixed on the shelves opposite, and his tall figure shaken from head to foot.

"I guess the chief's hit the nail on the head," thought Steve. "A man don't look like that who's dead easy in his nut, for sure. Hello! what game is he up to now?"

Wagstaff had suddenly wheeled about and started for the back room. Steve's impulse was to steal around the building to the back window, yet he briefly hesitated.

The man went only as far as the door of the kitchen, into which he stood gazing for several moments, with his fingers wildly clutching his sparse gray hair.

"He's looking at the kitchen wall where the trunk scraped it," decided Steve, watching his every movement. "The newspaper has told him what we're looking for, and he——"

But Steve was suddenly obliged to dart out of sight.

Wagstaff had turned again, and was tottering violently toward the street door.

He locked it, however, instead of leaving the shop. Then he put out the lamp, though it was only eight in the evening, and left the place in darkness.

Steve ran back to the window, and saw his gaunt figure disappear into the lighted kitchen, closing the door after him.

"He's up to some game to fool us," thought Steve. "I must pipe that off, for sure!"

The gate of an alley through which he that morning had passed to reach the rear of the building was now closed and locked.

On the other side of the shop was another, making in between the drug store and a tenement house, too far gone in decay to be occupied.

The ground in this alley was strewn with rubbish, old tomato cans, empty bottles, and no end of such refuse.

Carefully picking his way, Steve crept through this dark passage and reached the open space back of the buildings.

It covered quite an area. There was the yard back of Wagstaff's place and the empty tenement house. Just beyond these was an old stable, with a musty back shed. Next to this was an old shed and dump heap, which belonged to a junk shop which fronted on the next street.

At quite a little distance across this confusion of dirt heaps, sheds, and rubbish, for the place was as disordered as can be imagined, was the rear wall and yard of Leary's lodging house, in the next street. Only a straggling, tumble-down fence separated this place from those adjoining, and the lighted windows and doors of Leary's were plainly visible.

On reaching this miserable locality, Steve heard a sound which caused him to hug the building for concealment.

The back door of Wagstaff's kitchen was being unbolted, and the next moment the man emerged.

He carried a small lantern, which shook violently in his scrawny hand, and at once started off in the direction of the junk shop.

Steve crouched down and watched him.

For five minutes or more he prowled about back of the junk shop, vanishing once into the gloomy shed near by; and, at the end of that time, Steve saw him returning.

"I'd better take a sneak till he is under cover," he decided, and slipped back into the alley.

He waited only until Wagstaff had reëntered the house, then he crept around to the kitchen window.

It was without a curtain, and Wagstaff now was tacking a piece of dark cloth across the lower half of the frame. To look in, Steve would require something to stand upon.

Steve laid low and waited.

For five minutes he heard the man moving excitedly about in the kitchen, and then a curious, scraping noise began.

"I've got to see what he's doing," thought Steve. "Mebbe the old duffer's going to hang himself. Or mebbe he's up to some game to queer the case against him."

After briefly searching about in the darkness, Steve found an empty barrel which he had noticed that morning. This he brought and softly placed it under the kitchen window. Carefully mounting it, he then could look over the cloth and into the room.

The mystery of the noise was instantly explained.

Wagstaff was on his knees upon the floor engaged in scraping from the side wall of the room every sign that a trunk once had stood near it.

"So that's the game, is it?" said Steve to himself. "He thinks no fly cop like me is onto the room yet, and he means to head 'em off. I guess the chief'll have a use for him in the morning, all right."

The last thought had barely crossed his mind, however, when the ticklish perch on which Steve was standing suddenly collapsed. Without the slightest warning the head of the barrel fell in, and the latter overturned at the same time on the uneven ground.

Before Steve fairly knew what had happened, or before he could have caught himself, he came down squarely on his back on the side of the barrel, smashing through the staves with a tremendous crash, and for a moment seeing more stars than the heavens above presented, which was not a few. He was badly stunned, and almost lost consciousness.

The noise of his fall was echoed by a half-smothered yell from within the house, followed by a furious rush of feet; and, before Steve could begin to clear himself from among the loose hoops and staves, the alarmed and excited old druggist issued like a madman from the back door of the house.

CHAPTER V.

WAGSTAFF GIVES STEVE A SURPRISE.

Evidently Wagstaff had suffered from similar intrusions, for he located Steve almost instantly, and pounced upon him like a terrier on a rat.

"You little devil!" he snarled furiously, seizing Steve by the throat. "You were spying on me, were you?"

Steve had enough of his wits about him to know what had happened, though he could scarcely move, from the shock.

"Lemme alone!" he cried feebly, as he tried to resist the bony hands of the wiry old man. "Lemme alone, I say! If you don't, I'll——"

"If I do, you'll be the luckiest little scamp there is in Pennville!" Wagstaff furiously interrupted.

And, with surprising strength, against which Steve, in his weakened condition, was quite unable to cope, the en-

raged old man snatched him out from among the hoops and staves, and carried him into the house and bolted the door.

"Lemme down!" cried Steve, who was quickly recovering, wiggling about in the old man's arms. "Lemme out of here! If you don't, I'll shoot the top of your head off!"

But Wagstaff caught the gleam of the weapon Steve had succeeded in pulling, and, with a snarl like that of an angry wolf, he snatched it out of the young detective's hand.

"You'll shoot me, will you?" he muttered angrily. "I'll fix you so that you'll not shoot, or do anything else. I'll teach you to prowl about here watching me."

And, while thus giving vent to his anger and resentment, he threw Steve face down upon the floor, and quickly bound his hands behind his back.

"You'll shoot, will you?" he snarled, catching him up again and standing him on his feet. "You'll more likely get shot, you little mongrel."

"Say, old man!" cried Steve, gasping defiantly, quite himself again; "you want to handle me kinder easy. You might break me. What do you think I'm made of, injur rubber?"

"What were you doing out there?"

"I wasn't doing anything."

"You're lying. You were looking through my window!"

"Well, what if I was? That didn't hurt der window, did it? I wanted ter see was yer ter home."

"What did you want of me?"

"I wanted ter buy some parrigoric. Me little baby brother has der cramps in his stummick, and me muther sent me ter git it."

"You're lying!"

"Does I look like a feller as would lie about a baby what's dying with der cramps? I'm giving it ter yer straight. When I found der shop door locked——"

"You didn't try the shop door," cried Wagstaff, glaring fiercely down at Steve's defiant face. "I'd have heard you, if you had tried it."

"How could yer hear when yer was busy?" demanded Steve, cornered for a moment. "Yer was making such a noise with yer scraper you couldn't have heard me."

Wagstaff looked alarmed, and glanced sharply at the wall at which he had been at work.

Then the revolver he had laid on the table caught his eye, and gave him an idea.

Taking the lamp, he held it down to study Steve's face more closely, at the same time demanding harshly:

"What's your name?"

"Me name is Peters," said Steve promptly. "I live down on der Point, and my father works in der coal yards."

But the wrath pictured in Wagstaff's face already had given place to suspicion.

"You're lying again!" he cried sharply. "Your name is not Peters!"

"How der yer know so much? You weren't der guy that christened me."

"How came you by this revolver?"

"I keep it ter kill rats with. Der house where I live is full of 'em."

"Stop your lying!" Wagstaff now cried, replacing the lamp on the table. "Your name is not Peters. You are that boy I have read of as being connected with the police. I know your face, now. I saw it in one of the papers."

"You're wrong!" cried Steve. "That was my twin brother."

"No, I'm not wrong," snarled Wagstaff. "And I know why you were prowling about here and spying upon me. You're at work for the police."

Steve saw there was no use in longer putting up a bluff, so he met the situation flatfooted.

"Since you're wise to it all, then, what are you going to do about it?" he demanded.

Before replying, Wagstaff forcibly thrust Steve into a chair, then tightly closed the door leading to the shop.

His rage appeared to have abated on discovering Steve's identity, but the expression on his sallow face and in his glittering eyes was not encouraging.

Dropping into a chair fronting Steve, for the old man's knees were shaking tremulously, he said sharply:

"I don't know, yet, what I'll do about it. You have no business here. You were spying upon me to see what you could learn about that murder. I've read what the papers say about it, and you've seen too much to-night for your own good."

"Well, I ain't alone in the mess," returned Steve significantly.

"You're alone in knowing what I was doing," snarled Wagstaff. "Why shouldn't I put you out of the way, and then go on with my work. Who'd be the wiser? I have drugs in my shop which would end you in a second."

"Take the quickest, old man, if you really mean to do it," said Steve. "I wouldn't like to linger long on the trip."

A curious grin, half malicious, half approving, parted Wagstaff's gray lips and revealed the few teeth he had left in either jaw.

"Well, I'm not going to do it!" he said curtly. "Instead, I am going to set you free. Here, take your ugly little toy and put it back in your pocket. You may need it against a worse man than I am."

As he spoke, he reached back of Steve and loosed his hands, then passed him the revolver lying on the table.

All this rather took Steve by surprise.

"Say, old man, you're not so bad, after all," said Steve, curiously regarding him. "D'ye mean I'm free to go out, if I like?"

"You may go when you please," nodded Wagstaff soberly. "But I'd like to tell you something first."

"About the murder?"

"About what the papers say of it, boy! not about the murder," said Wagstaff quickly. "I know nothing about the murder itself."

"I'm blessed if I don't more'n half believe you," said Steve quickly. "But what was you scraping the wall for?"

Wagstaff glanced again at the collection of lime sprinkled over the floor near by, but the look in his sunken eyes was no longer that of fear.

"I'll tell you why I was scraping it," he said grimly. "I have been away all day, and I heard of the murder only when I returned. I didn't think much about it then, and not until I read my evening paper did I discover in what way I was involved."

"You mean you read about the trunk?"

"Yes," nodded Wagstaff. "And about the oilcloth, and the fact that the detectives were looking for the room they came from. All the evidence is reported in the paper."

"Then you had nothing to do with the job?"

"No more than yourself."

"But what was you scared of?"

"Because the old trunk and tablecloth were mine, and I lately had them in this room."

"Were they here yesterday?"

"No, I threw them away the day before. You see, I've a new cloth on the table, and the old trunk was falling to pieces, and took up too much room. So I threw them out on the dump heap back of the junk shop."

"If that's the case, why was you scraping the wall?" demanded Steve.

"Because I was not sure that any person could testify to having seen me throw the trunk away!" cried Wagstaff, quite excitedly. "Nor can I prove that I was not here when the crime was committed. I was away gathering herbs; but I was alone."

"Alone?"

"Yes, alone. How could I prove an alibi? Suppose the police were to claim that I returned here and killed the man? How could I prove that I did not, and that the old trunk and tablecloth were not here in this room when the deed was done?"

"Oh, I'm getting wise to your game now!" exclaimed Steve. "You started in to fix the wall so that you'd not be suspected."

"Precisely. That was my first impulse when the fear seized me. I just went out back to make sure the trunk was gone, and when I failed to find it I knew that I might possibly be suspected. I did not suppose that this room already had been located."

"I was onto it this noon," said Steve, somehow feeling that the old man was telling the truth. "But what made you change your mind, and release me?"

"Because I recognized you, and knew you were serving the police."

"You're dead right in that."

"And what use to lie in that case?" cried Wagstaff, with some feeling. "When a man is in a desperate situation, he had better tell the whole truth. If I already am suspected, it would be madness for me to conceal the true facts."

"I say, sir," cried Steve, suddenly thrusting out his boy's hand; "put it there! I believe you're giving it to me dead straight."

Wagstaff smiled faintly on seeing that he had won Steve's favorable opinion, and gravely shook his hand.

"Your belief may be worth something to me," he said, in troubled tones; "if you'll do what I ask."

"What's that?" demanded Steve.

"That you look into the case along with me, till we see what we can make of it."

"I'll do that," said Steve readily. "I've got the whole night before me, for I'm down here just to watch you."

"You need have no trouble in doing that, for I'll keep you here until morning, if you say so," grinned Wagstaff. "Wait till I get the paper containing a report of the evidence, and we'll see what we can make of the case."

"All right, sir," said Steve. "And if we can run down the right game—— Say, old man! Keep still for a second!"

Steve had suddenly sprang up and caught him by the arm, as he was about starting for the shop.

For a moment both listened intently.

"What did you hear?" Wagstaff at length muttered.

"There's some one out back there," whispered Steve. "Wait a bit, till we see what his game is."

They had only a moment to wait.

Approaching footsteps were heard, and then a sharp knock sounded on Wagstaff's back door.

The old man looked surprised and perplexed, much as if a visitor was very unusual; but Steve cried softly:

"See what 'tis! But don't give it away that I am in here. I'll lay low in the shop. Mebbe we'll strike a clew."

Wagstaff caught the idea, and nodded his approval; and Steve slipped silently into the gloomy shop, and partly closed the door.

TO BE CONTINUED.

A MYSTERIOUS BURGLAR.

By EMERSON BENNETT.

In the interior of Virginia there is a quiet little country town which we will call Wentville, and which, perhaps, contains a larger number of wealthy citizens in proportion to its population than any other in the State.

Though it boasts of at least one fine hotel, and has an old-fashioned stage line running through it, it is not a place of much resort for strangers from abroad.

In fact, except when the court is in session, or a fair is being held there, and the farmers flock in from the country, it is a rather dull village.

Some years ago quite a ripple of interest was created in Wentville by the arrival at the Wentville House of a young, handsome, and very stylish lady, who informed the landlord that if it were agreeable to him she would like to engage board for a few days, with the privileges of extending the same to a few weeks, in case she should desire to remain that length of time.

"I can easily accommodate you, madam, for any length of time," said the landlord, "provided——"

"Provided you can be satisfied with my respectability and my ability and promptness to pay for all I order," pursued the lady, with a charming smile, as the other seemed to hesitate.

"Why, the fact is, madam," resumed mine host, with a slight flush of embarrassment, "you see—the fact is—as I was saying—in short—pardon me—but it is so unusual for a lady stranger to come alone to——"

"I understand," interrupted the other, with a kind of laughing sigh, "a respectable lady is not supposed to live and travel and enjoy herself without having some kind of a man to take care of her. Well, I have a man, a husband, in fact, whose business is now taking him to so many places within a radius of a hundred miles from here, and who is so constantly on the move that I do not care to keep him company if I can avoid it. I want rest; and he told me to come to Wentville and remain here till he should join me, which might be within a week, and might not be for three or four weeks. He spoke of this hotel in the highest terms, though remarking at the same time that his knowledge had not been obtained through a personal visit, but from a gentleman of his acquaintance. It is quite probable that you have never heard of my husband; but he is well known in Richmond, and in many places in this region."

"Will you favor me with his name?" politely asked the landlord.

"Morelake—Walter Morelake," answered the lady, "of

the firm of Morelake, Bonbright & Co., wholesale commission merchants, of Baltimore, Maryland."

"Well, Mrs. Morelake," rejoined the host, with a graceful bow, "I am now perfectly satisfied, and it will afford me great pleasure to have you for a guest of whatever time it may suit your convenience and inclination to honor us with your company."

"Thank you, and now if I can find a room to suit me I think I shall be able to make myself contented till my dear lord and master comes to claim me. Those are my trunks," pointing to a couple which had just been put down from the stagecoach in which she had arrived. "And now, Mr.—a—a——"

"Holland, madam."

"Oh, yes, Holland. I could not for the moment just think of your name, though I have heard my husband mention it more than once. Now, Mr. Holland, as I was saying, I am going to intrust you with a little bit of a secret. I am a blue stocking."

"A blue stocking, madam?" repeated the landlord, with the air of one who would like to be considered knowing, and yet does not exactly comprehend; and naturally his eyes went down to her feet, which were, indeed, as prettily shaped feet as any landlord ever saw, and were certainly not covered with blue stockings.

"Yes," pursued the lady, smiling to herself, but helping the landlord out of the mist in a ladylike manner, "you know blue stocking is the pet name for a literary lady—a lady who writes books and articles for the popular periodicals of the day—and originated in a celebrated literary club in London, where the female members donned that peculiar article of apparel and subsequently became proud of the distinction."

"Ah, yes—exactly—I know!" said the blushing landlord, glad to be able to see his way clear. "And I congratulate you on being one of the great writers that everybody reads and talks about. I never expected to be so honored in this out-o'-the-way country place."

"But what I have told you is a profound secret," said the smiling lady; "and is not to be breathed to a living soul—except, perhaps, your wife; and I would not have mentioned it at all, only that it seemed necessary to account for my peculiarity in desiring a very retired room, where I can spend a great portion of my time with my door locked against intrusion. The fact is, I need perfect quiet, in order to be able to compose with facility; and I must have one of the most secluded rooms in your hotel, either on the first or second floor, and that retired part of the building, if such a thing be possible, where nobody passes, day or night. Of course I wish it understood that I write for the love of it, and not for mere pay."

"I have one room on the second floor," mused the landlord, "which occupies an angle between the front and back buildings, and is retired enough in all conscience, but the apartment is small, and has only one window, and, being heavily shaded, is gloomy even in daylight."

"Just the thing, I think," replied Mrs. Morelake, with animation. "Please let me see it."

The landlord showed her to it, and she was delighted; nothing could be better, she said.

So the literary lady took up her quarters at the Wentville Hotel, in the quiet little town of Wentville, to await the arrival of her husband, and in the meantime to throw off such scintillations of her genius as must find vent ir an outlet to the intellectual world.

Was her important secret kept sacredly, and her precious self allowed to remain incognito?

Yes, perfectly sacred, for three mortal hours, until the almost bursting landlady, who had received it from her husband, could get out to proclaim it to her nearest neighbors, and they to spread it all over the sleepy town, and wake up the aristocratic dames to the fact that a great literary character had come among them, and wished to remain unknown, and be considered no more than a common mortal.

Well, the result of all this was that the distinguished stranger at once became an object of great curiosity to the aristocratic but gossiping ladies of Wentville—and for that matter to their husbands, brothers, and fathers also—and the very next day after her arrival some of the highest-toned ones began to call on her and invite her to their dwellings, so that, if peace, rest, and quietness were really what she desired in coming to the place, she was now in a fair way not to get either.

Mrs. Morelake, however, was a very charming and amiable lady, who seemed to take all this annoyance very pleasantly and philosophically; and instead of complaining that her time was trespassed on, and her literary designs thwarted, she received all her visitors with a charming courtesy that warmed and won their hearts, and then began a round of return calls that made them all proud and happy.

Thus days slipped away so pleasantly as scarcely to be noted, and the great literary lady became the sensation of the place, to be talked about by all, admired by the male sex and envied by her own.

Dinners were given her, parties were made for her, and there was serious talk of getting up a ball in her honor; and yet not a soul in the town had a particle of evidence that she was what gossip had represented her to be.

While the sleepy town of Wentville was thus keeping itself awake over the sensation caused by the advent of this fair stranger, another sensation suddenly sprang up of a very different character.

It was proclaimed one morning that the old family mansion of Abner Richland, one of the oldest and wealthiest residents of the place, had been entered by a burglar during the preceding night, and money, jewelry, diamonds, and plate carried off, to the value of ten thousand dollars.

As no bolts were broken, it was supposed the thief or thieves had entered by means of keys, and many there were who believed that some of the servants of the family had been concerned in the robbery.

A large reward was offered for the apprehension of the burglar, and recovery of the stolen property, and detectives came from abroad to work up the case; but after a few days of investigation, being unable to gain the faintest clew, they abandoned the search and went home.

Just as the sensation caused by this mysterious crime was beginning to die down, so as not to be the chief topic of conversation at all times and in all places, another rich family, by the name of Granville, was robbed in the same mysterious manner, their loss being between five and six thousand dollars.

This second felony caused greater excitement than the first, for the reason that it proved the audacious villain or villains to be still in the place and working without fear of detection.

"Really, Mrs. Granville," said the literary stranger, as, with many others, she called the next day upon the lady of the mansion, "these two mysterious robberies, coming so near together, make me quite nervous. At the same time, if I can ever get hold of the facts, I——"

Here she suddenly paused, and blushed, and looked embarrassed, and one of the other ladies chimed in:

"You will weave them into one of your charming stories, of course."

"Ah," sighed Mrs. Morelake, "I should have kept my secret."

"Oh, no, for then you would have deprived us all of the great pleasure of knowing, admiring, and loving you," was the response.

"You have all been so very, very kind," rejoined Mrs. Morelake, putting her handkerchief to her eyes, "that henceforth, wherever I am in body, my heart will always be in Wentville."

"And we hope and pray no thief will ever carry it off," said another lady.

And then all laughed.

The very night following three other dwellings were robbed of an aggregate of seven thousand dollars; and the next day that quiet old town became alive with fresh excitement, which culminated in a public meeting, the offering of a reward, the influx of a number of detectives, the close watching of strangers, and the suspecting of many innocent persons.

Days passed on, and the thief, or thieves, remained undetected, and the lost property undiscovered, though no new burglaries took place in the meantime.

One day Mrs. Morelake received a letter, which, on reading, caused her to burst into tears.

"My dear husband," she exclaimed, "feeling unwell, returned to Baltimore, and now lies dangerously sick with the typhoid fever. I must go to him at once."

Of course everybody sympathized with her, and her lady friends hastened to the hotel to take leave of her, mingling their tears with hers.

"Our acquaintance has not been long, as men count mine," said one, with a sentimental sigh, "but it has been very sweet, and you must never forget me!"

"I shall never be entirely happy till I see you again," observed another.

"Oh, you must write at once, and soon come again," urged a third.

"It is like parting with a dear, dear friend whom I have known all my life," remarked a fourth.

And so they went on, and embraced, and kissed, and shed tears of sorrow.

The fatal hour came, and the coach was drawn up at the door.

A large crowd of lady friends did their farewell kissing and shed their farewell tears, and a large crowd of gentlemen friends shook hands, with lifted hats, and regretted it was not in order for them to kiss and weep also.

"I shall never, never, never forget Wentville and the kindness of its dear inhabitants," sobbed the trembling Mrs. Morelake, as the bowing landlord held open the coach door for her to enter.

The boot being already full of baggage, Mrs. Morelake's two trunks were in the act of being hoisted to the roof, when one of them slipped, and fell, and struck the wheel, and then burst open.

Well, what then?

Why, then out rolled before the astounded eyes of the good, kind citizens of Wentville some of the missing plate and jewelry for which a large reward had been offered.

For a few seconds there was a dead silence—everybody seemed struck dumb—and then from the men went up a wild shout, and from the women hysterical shrieks.

The mysterious burglar was no other than the dear literary belle of the last few weeks, Mrs. Walter Morelake.

The culprit turned pale at first, and then folded her arms and smiled defiance.

The ladies, dear souls, would have torn her to pieces in their fury—some of the enraged gentlemen might have helped them—but the officers of the law stepped forward, arrested, and protected her.

Of course, all her statements about having a merchant husband, and being a literary writer were false.

She was an experienced thief and burglar.

By visiting the houses as a dear friend, she had had an opportunity to see where everything was kept.

She had a male dress and burglar tools in one of her trunks, and by means of a rope ladder she had descended from and ascended to her retired room in the dead hours of the night.

By taking impressions of the locks, she knew what skeleton keys would open them, and therefore entered the dwellings, closets, chests, and drawers without using force or losing any valuable time.

Well, she was tried, convicted, and sentenced to ten years in the penitentiary.

Wentville has since settled down into the same old, dull, quiet, aristocratic place it was before the advent of our adventuress, and it is our opinion that it would not be safe for any stranger to wake it up in the manner she had done.

Some of the same dear, sweet ladies are living there yet; but whenever anything recalls to their minds the manner in which they were taken in by a female thief, they become just as mad as anybody need care to see, or hear, or feel.

FLOWERY WRITING.

Many letters are begun with the phrase which is not written, but is spoken or thought: "What shall I say?" And this is especially the case when the letter is to be of congratulation, or thanks, or condolence, or has reference to somewhat exceptional circumstances.

The writer is not satisfied with saying in simple, perhaps commonplace words just what he feels—just as he would speak it. He feels vaguely that the occasion requires something unusual, that what he writes must read well, and that he ought to think of some emphatic and eloquent phrases in which to express his sentiments.

But if he will look at the letter he has received himself he will see his mistake. Except in unusual cases, where his correspondent has a natural literary gift for original and graceful expressions, the letters that have spoken to his heart have been those that were written simply and naturally.

The sentences may have been abrupt, and they may have wandered from one subject to another and back again, and not sounded at all like the letters written by the heroes and heroines, and they may have ended sud-

denly without a graceful closing paragraph, but they were genuine and characteristic.

Their awkwardness was nothing, since their sincerity was so evident—a sincerity that might have been disguised under labored, bookish "fine writing."

The story is told of a Frenchwoman that she spent much time and thought in preparing a satisfactory letter of congratulation to a friend who had obtained a court appointment. She covered four large pages with beautiful phrases, expressing her joy over his good fortune. She read it to a literary man of fine taste and much good sense.

He asked her what she meant by all that.

"Why," she replied, "I want to tell him that no one appreciates better than I do the justice that his majesty has done him, and I hope in going away from here he will not forget his friends, and that he ought to remember me because I have always been interested in his career."

"Very well, madam, tear up these four large pages, and write to him what you have just said. Depend upon it, that will please him far better."

WASP DRONES WORK.

No lazy folk in waspland. They are all of them most industrious and ambitious—quite as much so, in fact, as their more celebrated relatives, the bees and the ants.

Labor and effort are evenly divided up in a nest of wasps. For instance, some of them assume the duty of plunderers, going out in search of food, while others act as policemen and stay at home and guard the place. Their devotion to honey is well known by those men who keep beehives, and constant warfare is needed to keep them out of the beehives and prevent them from carrying off the honey.

Then the drones, too, of the wasp world are energetic and worth while members of the community. They keep the town in the best of order and lead well-regulated, quiet lives. Of course, with the coming of winter their end arrives, but until that time they are really most exemplary creatures.

In parts of South America there is a huge special of ant, looked upon as considerable of a pest, which really has in its midst a social and military discipline, a society in which strict order is preserved.

Close observers of these creatures insist they have seen certain fractious ants penned up in holes and carefully guarded by watchful companions. And no one ant is allowed to kill another without having death inflicted upon him in turn.

ARGENTINA'S ATTRACTIONS.

Argentina, about which we have heard so much of late, is not a land of vast flat prairies. To most persons who have traveled but a few leagues inland from the capital, Argentina appears to be nothing but prairie land, but these lands, or "pampas," comprise hardly more than a quarter of the total area, the remainder being covered with lofty mountain ranges, broken tableland, and dense forests. For those who seek fresh fields to explore and to taste the delights of travel in the less known portions of the world, the trip across the Andes is one that will give the minimum of discomfort.

The Buenos Aires & Pacific Railway runs through service of sleeping and dining cars three times a week from Buenos Aires to Mendoza, passing over the Argentine Great Western Railway system between Villa Mercedes and Mendoza. At the latter place a change is made to the narrow gauge Transsandine Railway, which goes through magnificent mountain scenery to the summit tunnel, and on to Chile and the Southern Pacific, the whole journey from the Atlantic to the Pacific taking thirty-six hours.

The magnitude, the immense distance, the splendid coloring, and the awful stillness of the Andes can only be appreciated by a visit. The lone grandeur of the Christus Statue makes an unforgettable impression, and the inscription on the monument is worthy of note: "Sooner shall these mountains crumble into dust than the people of Argentina and Chile break the peace which they have sworn to maintain at the feet of Christ the Redeemer."

OIL DRILLING BY HAND.

Oil exists in great quantities in Siam, but the methods of securing it are exceedingly crude. The wells are not more than sixty feet deep, and are dug by hand. The oil secured is that which is baled from the bottom of the well by dippers on long sticks of bamboo. The oil is sold to the natives who live within calling distance of the wells.

ORIGIN OF ODD PHRASES.

"Eating humble pie," is a phrase which really arose from the corruption of the word "umbles" or "numbles," the coarser parts of a deer killed in hunting, which when made into a pie, were formerly reserved for the lower hunt servants; while "cooking his goose" is a phrase which originated when the King of Sweden, on approaching a hostile town, excited the contempt of the inhabitants by the smallness of his army. To express this they hung out a goose for him to shoot at, whereupon the king set fire to the town to "cook their goose."

Long ago unscrupulous people used to take a cat in a bag to market, where they tried to sell it for a pig. If, however, a purchaser opened the bag before buying, the cat, of course, jumped out, displaying the fraud. Hence the term "letting the cat out of the bag."

"Going to the dogs" comes from the Far East, where dogs are scavengers of the streets, and become so unclean as to be unfit to touch; while the expression, "Tell it to the marines," used to show disbelief in the truth of a story, arose from the fact that when the marines first went into service on ships they were naturally rather "green" concerning nautical affairs, and some one who related a very tall yarn was told to "tell it to the marines," the idea being that they could be more easily gulled.

It is a curious fact that the phrase "Bald as a badger," owes its origin to authors of the past who had no exact knowledge of natural history, and who, because the forehead of a badger is covered with smooth, white hairs, came to the conclusion that it was bald.

Years ago a theatrical manager of the bogus type had in his company an actor whose strong point was the *Ghost* in "Hamlet." If his salary was not forthcoming on Saturday, this actor would exclaim, "Then the ghost won't walk to-night," a phrase which is still used by actors on pay day, and which provides a striking illustration of how a casual remark becomes a common saying.

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

Motor Artillery for French Army.

The French gunners' method of handling in action heavy artillery drawn by motor traction was the chief point of interest recently for foreign observers of the grand maneuvers of the French army.

The wheels of the motors are broad, with outside tires composed of jointed steel, and it has been found that the guns can be taken by this means across freshly plowed fields or over ditches and minor obstructions.

When the heavy ordnance came into action the motor tires were uncoupled and spread out behind the cannon, forming rails on which the pieces recoiled after firing, without sinking into the soil.

More than one hundred thousand men and a large fleet of aëroplanes operating in two armies opposed to each other over a wide range of country stretching from Montauban to Agen on the north and from Auch to Toulouse on the south.

Wins Walk for a House.

Mrs. Marie Chester, of Middletown, N. Y., mother of ten children, three of whom accompanied her, finished at Minneapolis recently a 1,500-mile walk. She left New York City July 31, and spent fifty-three days on the road.

Several business men of Middletown agreed to rebuild Mrs. Chester's burned house, at an expense of $4,000, provided she made the trip in sixty-five days. Mrs. Chester and the children, a girl and two boys, carried knapsacks with food and blankets.

Wind Blows Stick Through Two Women.

Two women were transfixed by a piece of timber in the cyclone, at York, Pa., and were carried eight miles in an automobile, pinned together.

Both of the women, Mrs. George Sipe and Mrs. Harry Shenk, are in a serious condition. They took refuge in a barn which blew down during the storm, and the piece of wood, carried by the wind, passed through Mrs. Shenk's left arm and Mrs. Sipe's abdomen, protruding near her spine.

The storm that swept Pennsylvania and Maryland was the most severe of the season. Trees were uprooted, houses unroofed, and barns leveled.

Twenty-three-year-old Mystery of the Sea is Solved.

A twenty-three-year-old mystery of the sea is explained by a letter received at Christchurch, New Zealand, stating that two survivors of a vessel wrecked on Cape Horn found the wreck of the Glasgow ship *Marlborough* in a cove with twenty skeletons near by.

The *Marlborough* left Lyttleton, New Zealand, in January, 1890, for London, and never was heard of again. It was supposed she sank after colliding with an iceberg.

Quarter Stretch at Polo Grounds Gone.

For the first time in twenty-three years the 25-cent section of the bleachers at the Polo Grounds was abolished shortly before the close of the season. The building department ordered the barbed-wire barrier to be torn down, presumably because the "quarter stretch," accommodating 1,000 fans, had but one exit and was unsafe. When the 25-cent patrons mounted to the old perch and found that they no longer were penned in they ran pell-mell for the 50-cent seats close to the left-field foul line. It is understood that in future the 25-cent tickets will be limited in number, the purchasers being allowed to occupy any seats in the open stand.

Crosses Sea Alone at 4.

"Please take care of me. I am going to my mamma. Please do not kiss me."

This notice, written in several languages on a small card attached to her pinafore, was Miss Margaretha Rischen's sole protection when she arrived at Ellis Island recently from her home in Vienna, Austria. Margaretha is 4 years old. She is on her way to Kenwood, Cal., where her mother is living now that her papa is dead.

The little one crossed the sea in safety, and reached Hoboken with $5 in money and the little card which explained everything for her. A stewardess took her off the ship at Hoboken and bought her an apron, a new frock, and other little toilet articles. The child had a ticket through to California.

Young Dan Hanna Works as Pressman.

Dan Hanna, junior, son of Dan R. Hanna by his first wife, Mrs. May Harrington Hanna-Stallo, and heir to millions left by his grandfather, Senator Mark Hanna, is working in the press room of a newspaper, at Cleveland, Ohio.

His father owns the *Leader* and *News* of that city, and young Dan, clad in grimy overalls, works each day in the press room. He says he intends to learn the game from the ground up.

A Detective Feat.

A few months ago the safe of the Hotel Berkeley, London, was robbed of $30,000 in money and jewels—principally the property of guests. Much mystery surrounded the crime, as the two night porters, Arthur James and William Gowers, the latter frightfully mutilated, were found bound and gagged on the floor of the office before the open and empty safe, which had been entered by a perfectly fitting key.

Little had been published concerning the work of the detectives on the case, but it all came out in Old Bailey recently when the four robbers were sentenced. The night porter, Arthur James, who secured an impression of the key to the safe, got seven years; James Sharman, also a hotel employee, ten years, and his brother, Stephen Sharman, and a William Fell, fourteen years each. It transpired that Arthur James had turned king's evidence, confessing how he had taken the impression of the safe's key, had let in the robbers, helped assault his fellow night porter, Gowers, and had then allowed himself to be bruised and tied up likewise.

When the detectives under Chief Inspector Fowler and Inspector Carlin were called to the hotel, a searching inquiry soon convinced them that the story James told of the attack on himself was not quite as it should be. In-

spectors Fowler and Carlin evolved a theory that at least one of the thieves was connected with the hotel, and this proved its accuracy in a remarkably short time.

From Gowers it was impossible to obtain information; he was too badly injured, and he was quite in the dark as to his assailants. The detectives' only hope was that James would provide them with a definite clew. He was permitted to resume work at the hotel, but instead of being reinstated as night watchman he was given duties in which he was kept under constant observation.

About three weeks after the theft the watchman who had superseded James attempted to dislodge a rat from a radiator behind which it had taken refuge, and in doing so he found a bag containing £145 in gold and certain papers, which were recognized as part of the contents of the rifled safe. The detectives marked every coin, and then restored the bag to its hiding place.

James was then told, without being acquainted of the discovery, to resume his duties as night porter. He did so, and the officers did not have to wait long. He was seen to take £5 from the bag, and when "shadowed" to a pawnbroker's shop he was detected in the act of redeeming a pledge with two of the marked sovereigns. On arrest he turned king's evidence, and at the same time admitted that, quite unknown to his accomplices, he had taken the bag containing the £145 as a little "extra."

With James' betrayal of his accomplices, and with other information, it was not long before the police were able to arrest Fell and James Sharman, but Stephen Sharman led them a long chase. They followed him to Brighton, Westcliff, and other coast resorts, but were always just too late to arrest him. It was not until Scotland Yard invited the aid of the press that he was secured.

Farmers Flock to Canada.

Western Canada received 140,000 settlers from the United States during the past season, according to a statement issued by Bruce Walker, commissioner of immigration.

This was a slight increase over last year.

Little White House for Vice President.

A little White House for the vice president will be established in Washington, D. C., if the suggestion of Representative Frank Clark, of Florida, chairman of the committee on public grounds and privileges, is carried out by Congress.

Oldring Makes Double Play Alone.

It isn't often that an outfielder makes a double play all by himself, but the feat was accomplished by Rube Oldring in a game between the Naps and the Mackmen in Philadelphia, shortly before the close of the season. In the sixth inning, with Turner on second base, Oldring, in left field, caught a line drive from Gregg's bat and then sprinted to the middle sack in time to double up Turner, who had started to steal third when the ball was hit. Oldring covered nearly fifty yards in his run for the bag, but he did it in record time—for a ball player.

Finds Pearl in Oyster.

George Rogovoy, a Russian tourist who is visiting in Philadelphia, with his wife, dined one night in a fashionable restaurant in Chestnut Street. While he was eating his third oyster Rogovoy bit into something hard.

He took the substance from his mouth and threw it along the floor with impatience. His wife, who is a practical woman, said:

"My dear, that might have been a pearl."

"Pooh!" said Rogovoy. Nevertheless when his teeth again closed upon something else hard in his sixth oyster he took it from his mouth and examined it. Then he and his wife went to a Chestnut Street jeweler and were informed that the object was a pear-shaped pearl of perfect contour and about twice as large as a large pea. They were told it is worth $5,000. Now Rogovoy is wondering how much he threw away.

English Stroke at Yale.

The so-called English stroke will be continued by the Yale crew during the next year, and W. Averill Harriman, head coach last season, will again continue in that capacity, assisted by J. O. Rodgers, a former head coach. Mr. Harriman has returned to college to complete his course. Announcement of the plans for the fall and winter practice is expected in a few days, when the crew men are called out.

New Oil Fuel Found May Work Revolution.

A new fuel has been invented by Henry T. Caullet, of East State Street, Trenton, formerly a member of the State board of riparian commissioners.

The fuel is a combination of oils that produces efficiency 300 per cent greater than gasoline and costs a third or less.

Neck Phone for Rescuers.

Life-saving in mine accidents will be aided by a device just perfected in the Pittsburgh station of the United States bureau of mines. It is a neck telephone, which will permit of speech between the rescuer in the mine and those on the surface, while the former is struggling through smoke and gas. The apparatus has been tested and approved by the government engineers.

A notable example of the necessity of constant communication was shown recently at the Courtney Mine disaster, when the failure of his breathing apparatus caused the death of a rescuer who was unable to call for help.

The device is not much different from the headgear worn by the average telephone operator. The receiver is strapped over the head and against the ear, but the transmitter is a supersensitive plate strapped against the neck. All the rescuer does is to talk in his throat and he is heard distinctly by the man at the end of the wire, perhaps a mile or two away.

The new telephone can be used by rescuers who favor the mouth-breathing oxygen apparatus used by the professional members of the government rescue corps who are sent to all big mine catastrophes. On several occasions members of the corps have almost lost their lives when the apparatus went wrong, and were saved only through the timely arrival of comrades.

With the mouth-breathing apparatus which the government men use the rescuer's mouth is covered with the inhaling and exhaling tubes, and he clamps his teeth on the covering to hold the air tubes in his mouth. This denies him the use of his lips and therefore an ordinary transmitter is impossible.

While using an ordinary desk telephone a year ago John W. Paul, chief of the government rescue corps, noticed the distinctness with which the voice would carry

if the transmitter were placed against the speaker's chest. By moving it to the neck he found the voice vibrations were clearer. A telephone manufacturing company received instructions to experiment with the idea and succeeded in devising an effective instrument.

Entire Town at Burial of Football Star.

President Charles H. Spooner, of Norwich University, a company of cadet students, and practically the entire town of Greenfield, Mass., attended the funeral recently of Vernon S. Belyea, Norwich football player, who died from injuries received in a game with Holy Cross, at Worcester.

President Spooner and the members of the Norwich football squad walked beside the hearse from the church to the cemetery.

Here Are the Prize Baseball Beauties.

Following is a list of the highest-priced baseball deals. Many of the ball players who are pulling down the big salaries did not figure in deals, having developed their best talents while on teams where they are now.

Mike Kelly, 1887—Chicago to Boston, $10,000.

John Clarkson, 1888—Chicago to Boston, $10,000.

Theodore Breitenstein, 1894—St. Louis to Cincinnati, $10,000.

Rube Marquard, 1910—Indianapolis to New York, $11,000.

"Lefty" Russell, 1911—Baltimore to Philadelphia Athletics, $12,000.

"Marty" O'Toole, 1911—St. Paul to Pittsburgh, $22,500.

Larry Chappell, 1913—Milwaukee to Chicago White Sox, $25,000.

Eighteen stars flashed into baseball this season. That is, only eighteen of the 150 recruits who went up to the two big leagues at the close of last season have really made good. The sixteen clubs of the National and American Leagues got the 150 players by purchase or draft from minor leagues. Most of them were selected by scouts, who spent a lot of money traveling about the country searching for promising material.

The Detroit Tigers are probably the luckiest club, having obtained three men who have made good, Bobby Veach, Ray McKee, and George Dauss. The Cleveland Naps got Chapman, a good all-round player. The St. Louis Browns have Leverenz, a pitcher, and Agnew, who has done pretty well as a catcher. The Chicago White Sox did quite well, getting Ray Schalk, one of the best young catchers, and "Reb" Russell, one of the pitching "finds" of the season. The Philadelphia Athletics have Schang, a remarkably good catcher, and two other players, Shawkey and E. Murphy. Washington had fine luck, Boehling, a pitcher, having proved a marvel.

In the National League New York got Demaree, a star pitcher, Boston found a crack shortstop in Maranville, and the Pittsburgh Pirates got a good infielder in Viox. Hap Meyers, of Boston, was the only recruit first baseman to hold his place for the season. Stengel, of the Brooklyn Dodgers, and Connelly, of Boston, were the only outfield "finds" in the National League.

Claims Kidnaped Boy as Her Son.

Julia Anderson, of Barnesville, S. C., who claims to be the natural mother of a little boy now held as Robert, the son of Mr. and Mrs. C. P. Dunbar, of Opelousa, La., whose kidnaping and subsequent recovery stirred the South, has been found in a destitute condition in Savannah on her way to Columbia, Miss.

There she expects to participate in the fight for the possession of the boy, when W. C. Walters, held in jail on the kidnaping charges, is brought to trial in December.

According to the woman, Walters, who is a peddler, kidnaped her boy, Bruce Anderson, at Barnesville in February, 1912, seven months before the disappearance of the Dunbar child. Walters is being prosecuted by the Dunbars, who say it was their little boy whom he kidnaped.

The child now is in the possession of the Dunbars. Mrs. Anderson proposes to join forces with Walters in his fight for acquittal. She says that Walters has acknowledged that he kidnaped her boy, Bruce, and that he has promised to return the child to her if he can regain his liberty and secure possession of him.

Mrs. Anderson came to Savannah from Wilmington, N. C. She left Wilmington with but a few cents above her railroad fare to Savannah. She was then under the impression that the case against Walters was to have been called for immediate trial.

When she arrived in Savannah she was wholly without funds. For two days and nights she remained at the Union Station without sleeping or eating.

The evident distress of the stranger finally attracted the attention of the matron at the station, and of the police officer on duty there. They inquired into the cause of her appearance of worry, and, breaking down, she sobbed forth her story.

"The Dunbars tried to buy me off," she said. "They offered me money to drop all court proceedings and let them have my baby. I wouldn't hear to it. He is mine. I want him, and I am going to get him. I can prove he is my son."

Ex-slave, 115, Content With Sleep and Soup.

George Banks, who lives in a log cabin, seven miles from Bangor, Mich., is 115 years old. From a little pickaninny on a Kentucky plantation he grew into a strong young slave, and in 1827 he escaped. He managed to stay escaped until the Civil War made him actually free. George fought through the war on the Union side, leaving his present abode to join the army.

It was in 1846 that George came to this region and built his cabin. He reared a family there, but all are dead except a granddaughter, aged 52, who tries to take care of him.

On sunny days he sits on a little stool in the doorway of his cabin, while pigs and chickens unconcernedly stroll in and out of the house. On rainy days he—with the pigs and chickens—stays inside. Not in fourteen years has he been more than a hundred feet away from his house.

He has worn the same suit of clothes for thirty-two years. Soup and tobacco compose his menu. Fourteen hours a day George sleeps; five hours more than President Wilson and ten hours more than Thomas Edison.

"Herreshoff" Defender to be Built of Bronze.

The Herreshoff sloop to be built for the Vanderbilt syndicate to enter next year's trial races for the honor of defending the America's Cup against Sir Thomas Lipton's new challenger will be constructed of bronze. This was decided recently after a long conference between Robert W. Emmons, Second, of Boston, who has been appointed

manager of the boat, and "Nat" Herreshoff, the designer. While a heavy steel boat was first considered, it was decided that a lighter boat would be more desirable.

It was said that John B. Herreshoff, president of the Herreshoff Manufacturing Company, which is to build the Vanderbilt sloop at Tarrytown, N. Y., met a group of members of the New York Yacht Club to discuss plans for another syndicate, which is planning to have another Herreshoff boat in the trial races.

"Dick" Cleveland to be a Football Star.

Modest "Dick" Cleveland, son of Grover Cleveland, is not only an honor student at Philips-Exeter Academy and the hero of many a track meet and hockey game, but his friends say he has the making of a football star.

Dick is fifteen years old and weighs 160 pounds.

Runs Auto Over Bandit.

An unidentified highwayman is in the hospital at Chester, S. C., with probably fatal injuries which he received when he was run over by an automobile driven by W. B. Ferguson, a wealthy planter, whom he tried to rob.

As Mr. Ferguson was motoring near Great Falls he was stopped at a lonely place by two men. They demanded that he give up his money and valuables. As Mr. Ferguson showed a disposition to refuse their demand, one of the men walked in front of the car, pointed a revolver at the planter, and told him that if he dared to run his car another foot he would be killed.

Mr. Ferguson parleyed with the robbers for a few minutes, and when the man in front of the car was off guard, he threw on all the speed his automobile could command and in a second the highwayman had been thrown to the ground and run over. The other robber ran away, leaving his companion on the ground. Realizing that the man had been badly injured, Mr. Ferguson returned and summoned a physician. The robber was carried in the automobile to a hospital.

Swiss in War Game Above the Clouds.

A mimic warfare above the clouds was brought to an end at Geneva, Switzerland, by 600 mountaineers, forming part of the Alpine section of the Swiss army, who descended from the Jungfrau Joch, 11,140 feet high, where they have bivouacked in the snow throughout the night.

They executed a forced march across the perilous Aletsch glacier during a driving snowstorm without the loss of a single man from fatigue, and concluded the splendid feat by storming the Eggishorn, a mountain 9,625 feet high.

Frog Wears Wedding Ring.

Mr. and Mrs. J. A. DeGuire, of Newark, N. J., who were guests at a hotel at Lenox, Mass., has returned home happy in the possession of a wedding ring which they lost when they were on their honeymoon at Lenox five years ago.

Mrs. DeGuire lost the ring, a gold band with her name and that of her husband engraved on the inside of the circlet, in Stockbridge Bowl, an artificial pond, where they were boating during their honeymoon. The other day they were surprised to find exhibited at the desk of the hotel a gold band which had been recovered by a small boy, in Laurel Lake, at Lee, where he was catching frogs. The boy brought the frogs to the hotel to sell them to the chef, and showed him one frog which wore around its middle the ring, tightly grown about with the flesh of the frog.

Mrs. DeGuire found that the circlet was her wedding ring. It is supposed that it had slipped over the head of a small frog when it was lost in Stockbridge Bowl, and the frog grew into it. The ring was unharmed by the action of the water, and the names engraved on it were perfectly legible. A strange feature of the incident was the fact that the frog had managed to get from Stockbridge Bowl to Laurel Lake, a distance of several miles.

Beaten Two Hours for $465.

For more than two hours two masked men beat, kicked, and tortured Jacob Raspberry, 45 years old, a farmer, before they forced him to reveal the hiding place of $465 he concealed in a chest.

It was not until Raspberry heeded the pleadings of his aged mother, who, with her husband, had been tied in bed by the robbers, that the bandits succeeded. The money stolen represented the life savings of Raspberry, who had no faith in banks.

Two arrests were made.

No "Excuse Me" for Yale's New Coach.

In the Yale scrimmage practice one day recently one big chap smashed through at guard and lit into the man opposite him in rugged fashion. He helped his opponent to his feet at the end of the play, saying: "Excuse me, old man, I didn't mean to get into you so hard." Coach Jones heard the remark and strode into the mix-up. "Here, you," he said, calling to the humble one, "what are you excusing yourself for? This is a man's game. I don't want to hear any more of this 'excuse-me' business. Now give us your signal, Mr. Quarter Back."

Gets Rattlesnake With His Lasso.

J. E. Franklin, who operates a sawmill on the Red River, four miles north of Denison, Texas, captured a huge rattlesnake in a novel manner. He lassoed it.

Franklin, years ago, lassoed many horses and cows on the plains of west Texas, but this is the first time he ever used his skill with the rope to seize a snake.

After throwing the rope around the rattler's head, Franklin struggled with the reptile an hour before he subdued it sufficiently to place it in a box.

Brief Sporting News.

Chief Bender is the pitcher who has pulled the Philadelphia Athletics through the tough games. In figuring all of Bender's games, it is found that he has allowed but 1.8 runs per game, leading all of his mates.

Love, a pitcher signed up by the Washington Senators, is sure to have the distinction of being the tallest pitcher in either league. He is 6 feet 7 inches tall, and is scarcely 20 years old, so that there is still hope of his growing up.

Eddie Murphy, of the Philadelphia Athletics, is the most effective "lead-off" man in the American League. In 119 games he scored 95 runs.

Billy Killifer, catcher for the Philadelphia team in the National League, has the best average of any player in the league. His average is .987, and he has made only 5 errors in nearly 100 games. Chief Myers, of the New York Giants, has made 22 errors this season.

The Boston Braves' first sacker, Schmidt, who weighs

in the neighborhood of 250, has been nicknamed the "last station." Base runners fear to slide into first sack, thinking that the "Little Giant" may fall on them.

Pitcher Walter Johnson, of the Washington Senators, has already passed the record he established for himself in 1912. Johnson has now won thirty-three games—one more than last season.

The National League is a better-hitting aggregation than the American. In 35,971 times at bat its players have made 9,417 safeties, or an average of .265 for the league. The American League has 8,826 hits in 35,051 at bat, average, .254.

Maysville, of the Ohio State League, has a catcher—Charles Uhrig—who is but 16 years of age. He was signed late in the season, and will be retained for next year.

The right-field pasture was well guarded in the world's series by Murphy, of the Athletics, and Murray, of the Giants. Both of them are great fielders, and they can hit, too.

Raising Apples With a Plow.

Fruit growers of eastern Kansas could not understand why Frank Morrill's apple orchard in Wyandotte County, had a better crop this year than any other orchard in that part of the State. Morrill pruned his trees, and so did the others. He sprayed his trees, and his neighbors did the same. Now Morrill explains how he did better. He cultivated the ground between the trees, going over it twice with a disk, and that was the one thing the others failed to do.

In the long drouth of the summer the ground dried out. The earth cracked and the little moisture that was there escaped. Where the surface of the earth was not cultivated the hot air went down and killed the tender roots, but the plowing in the Morrill orchard plugged the cracks in the ground and bottled up the moisture. Trees that had not been cultivated dropped two-thirds more apples than those that had been cultivated. Morrill has 500 acres devoted to apple orchards.

Indians to Cook Dogs Minus Yelps.

The humane society made formal protest to the management of the annual frontier show, held at Cheyenne, Wyo., to prevent the Arapahoe Indians from enjoying their tribal feast of dog.

To an Indian, stewed dog is as diamond-backed terrapin is to an epicure, and on the reservation worthless canines are dumped into boiling water, yelps, hair, and all, and served minus the yelps.

The Arapahoe chief, when told of the objections, promptly agreed to kill the dogs before placing them in the kettle.

Choked to Death in Purdue "Tank Scrap."

F. W. Obenchain, of South Whitley, Ind., died during the annual "tank scrap" between the freshman and sophomore classes at Purdue University, Lafayette, Ind., recently. Obenchain, a sophomore, and his classmates wore leather collars, reenforced with metal, to protect their necks. The dead student had a goiter, and during the excitement attending the fight, his neck swelled until he was choked to death.

Shortly before the fight ended, two freshmen, noticing the sophomore lying on the ground, dragged him away. When the man made no resistance they examined him and discovered he was dead. Physicians said Obenchain had been dead fifteen minutes when found.

University authorities issued a statement, in which it was said Obenchain's death was not due to any injury received in the fight. It also was announced that the historic "tank scrap" never would be held again.

The annual freshman-sophomore fight got the name of "tank scrap" because of its being held near a water tank.

The freshmen were victors in the fight, and were parading their victims around the campus and had lighted bonfires when news of Obenchain's death was announced. The sophomores then were released and the fires extinguished.

Leather Pocketbook Found in Big Fish.

H. Y. Peters went fishing in the Iowa River, near Eldora, Iowa, a few days ago. Peters got a bite. He pulled in a carp weighing almost fifteen pounds.

Noticing an unusual lump on the body of the fish, Peters and his companions decided to hold an autopsy. They found a leather pocketbook about five inches long and three wide in the fish. In the pocketbook they discovered some papers, yellow with age, but the writing upon them was discernible. The papers evidently were the property at some time of some one living in Johnstown, Pa.

Peters kept the papers and the pocketbook.

Five Hours on Cowcatcher.

Fifteen-year-old Leslie Cripps was playing at "stealing rides" in the railroad yards at Stockton, Cal. He climbed on the cowcatcher on an engine just as it started. The engineer did not hear his calls for help. For five hours and seventy miles he was carried.

Leprosy Found in Many States.

Leprosy exists in many States and in all of our island possessions. The control of the disease is a problem of national importance, in the opinion of Surgeon General Rupert Blue, of the United States public health service. In a recent issue of *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, Doctor Blue discusses in detail its existence and the possibility of its control.

This disease, which has afflicted mankind since the beginning of history, and which most persons know of only through the Bible, was undoubtedly introduced into the United States from abroad, but the exact time of its first appearance in this country is uncertain. Cases have been imported into the Gulf States through seaports, to the Pacific coast through Chinese immigration and to the Northern Central States by Scandinavian immigration. In some of these States the disease was evidently more common many years ago than at the present time.

In Louisiana, where no record is found of leprosy 140 years ago, the number of leprous beggars on the streets of New Orleans in 1786 was so great that the city authorities had to isolate them in an institution outside of the city. On account of the lack of records of death and disease in many of our States the extent of leprosy in the United States cannot be accurately estimated.

A report made by the United States marine hospital service some years ago showed 278 cases in the United States. In 1909 reports were obtained of 139 cases in thirteen of the States, 764 in Hawaii, 17 in Porto Rico, and 2,330 in the Philippine Islands. In 1912, 146 cases were reported in the United States, 696 cases in Hawaii,

28 cases in Porto Rico, and 2,754 in the Philippines, making a total of 3,624 officially reported cases in the United States and its possessions.

On account of the loathsome character of the disease, the helplessness of those afflicted with it, and the public dread regarding it, leprosy has been the subject of consideration by the Federal government for many years. In 1889 a regulation was issued forbidding the entry of any vessel to any port of the United States without a certificate from the proper official showing that no case of leprosy was to be found on board. Lepers apprehended and detained at quarantine were deported to the foreign country from which they came. This regulation is practically in force at the present time.

The immigration laws also forbid the landing of lepers, so that there is ample authority for the exclusion from the country of those afflicted with the disease, although on account of its long period of development the possibility of the entry of occasional cases must be recognized. The immigration laws provide that any alien afflicted with leprosy may be deported at any time within three years after his arrival. The Federal government is thus able, by deportation, to relieve the State of the burden of the care of those who may have been overlooked at the time of their entrance into this country.

In 1891 the surgeon general of the public health service recommended the establishment of a national leper hospital by the Federal government. The need of such an institution still exists. Federal, State, and municipal health authorities have for years urged the establishment of a national leper home. In the meantime the public health service is studying leprosy in the hope of devising methods of prevention and cure, so that this serious problem may be properly solved.

Aliens' Cost to New York.

During the past three years it cost New York just $208,446.90 to treat aliens in the wards of the Bellevue and its allied hospitals. In this period, from the first of 1910 to the last of 1912, the commissioners of accounts, Harry M. Rice and Jeremiah T. Mahoney, found that approximately 9,879 noncitizens of the United States were cared for in New York institutions free of charge, at an average cost of $21.10 each.

The commissioners of accounts, who submitted their report to Mayor Kline, discovered that during the year 1912, 57,422 persons were treated in the hospitals. "An inspection of the records of these patients," the commissioners say, "in 11,334 cases treated during the months of October, November, and December, 1912, shows that 671 were less than three years in this country.

Hero Medal Hangs on His Suit of Stripes.

Wearing a Carnegie hero medal pinned on the front of his suit of stripes, Ben J. Cottle, a druggist, has begun a one-year sentence on the convict gang on the roads of New Hanover County, North Carolina.

Cottle was a drug clerk in August, 1911, when he stopped a runaway horse on the river bank and saved the life of a little daughter of Doctor Morris M. Caldwell. The heroic deed was called to the attention of the Carnegie commission, and he was awarded a medal and $1,000.

Cottle used his cash prize to establish himself in the drug business, and has been in trouble ever since. Two or three times he was charged with violating the prohibition law, but escaped serious punishment. When last arrested he was charged with allowing gambling in his place of business, and also of selling a drink "doped" with 47 per cent alcohol.

Had Cottle not been awarded the $1,000 he would in all likelihood be making an honest living for himself, wife, and two children as a respectable drug clerk. It is not known what action may be taken by the Carnegie commission, whether the medal will be taken from Cottle or not.

Champion Snake Catcher.

Ever since "Lonesome Jack" Allman, of Los Angeles, was seven years old he has been fond of snakes. Recently he captured his eighteenth thousand.

"The rattlesnake is the most intelligent of all reptiles and the most affectionate," Jack declared. "After they have been fanged they are the most desirable of snake pets."

Jack made a journey through the mountains recently in quest of snakes, and brought back several very large rattlers. He said:

"I found out rattlers are thicker in the mountains this summer than for years. When I see a snake track in the dust I can tell what kind of a snake made it, which way it was traveling, and about how long since it passed by. I have a call that will attract rattlesnakes to me if they are near. I discovered the sound accidentally, and keep it secret. Snakes have no ears, but they seem to be able to detect sound."

Zero in Vacuums.

A scientific worker recently succeeded in exhausting a vessel to a pressure of two ten-millionths of a millimeter of mercury—four one-thousand-millionths of a pound per square inch—which is the highest vacuum ever attained experimentally. At this pressure one cubic millimeter of gas would still contain about eight and a half millionth molecules—a number equal to nearly twice the population of New York City.

Bloodhounds for Farm.

With one of his own employees commissioned a deputy sheriff, with a justice of the peace employed upon a near-by farm, and a pair of keen-nosed bloodhounds soon to arrive, T. S. Griffith, proprietor of the Glen Tana dairy farm, on the Little Spokane River, will be equipped to apprehend and punish immediately culprits who trespass upon his acres.

In recent months several valuable milk cows have perished as the targets of careless or malicious huntsmen, and great annoyance has resulted from fishermen going over or under the fences and whipping the stream for trout, Mr. Griffith said recently.

Gordon Smith, who works for Mr. Griffith, was recently given a deputy sheriff's star. On the Waikiki Farm, just above the Glen Tana, owned by Jay P. Graves, John Ludergust, an employee, is to discharge the function of a justice of the peace, and together they will attend to trespassers after the bloodhounds have led to their capture.

TOBACCO HABIT You can conquer it easily in 3 days, improve your health, prolong your life. No more stomach trouble, no foul breath, no heart weakness. Regain manly vigor, calm nerves, clear eyes & superior mental strength. Whether you chew or smoke pipe, cigarettes, cigars, get my interesting Tobacco Book. Worth its weight in gold. Mailed free.
E. J. WOODS, 534 Sixth Av. 230 C, New York, N.Y.

The Nick Carter Stories

ISSUED EVERY SATURDAY BEAUTIFUL COLORED COVERS

When it comes to detective stories worth while, the **Nick Carter Stories** contain the only ones that should be considered. They are not overdrawn tales of bloodshed. They rather show the working of one of the finest minds ever conceived by a writer. The name of Nick Carter is familiar all over the world and the stories of his adventures are read eagerly by millions in twenty different languages. No other stories have withstood the severe test of time so well as those contained in the **Nick Carter Stories.** It proves conclusively that they are the best.

We give herewith a list of some of the back numbers in print. You can have your news dealer order them or they will be sent direct by the publishers to any address upon receipt of the price in money or postage stamps.

652—The Green Box Clue.
653—The Taxi-cab Mystery.
654—The Mystery of a Hotel Room.
655—The Tragedy of the Well.
656—The Black Hand.
657—The Black Hand Nemesis.
658—A Masterly Trick.
659—A Dangerous Man.
660—Castor, the Poisoner.
661—The Castor Riddle.
662—A Tragedy of the Bowery.
663—Four Scraps of Paper.
664—The Secret of the Mine.
665—The Dead Man in the Car.
666—Nick Carter's Master Struggle.
667—The Air-shaft Specter.
668—The Broken Latch.
669—Nick Carter's Sudden Peril.
670—The Man with the Missing Thumb.
671—Feltman, the "Fence."
672—A Night with Nick Carter.
673—In the Nick of Time.
674—The Dictator's Treasure.
675—Pieces of Eight.
676—Behind the Mask
677—The Green Patch.
678—The Drab Thread.
679—The Live-wire Clue.
680—The Vampire's Prey.
681—The Policy King Baffled.
682—The Madman's Gig.
683—A Life at Stake.
684—Trailing a Secret Thread.
685—The Crimson Flash.
686—A Puzzle of Identities.
687—The Westervelt Option.
688—The Vanishing Heiress.
689—The Birth of a Mystery.
690—A Clue from the Past.
691—The Red Triangle.
692—Doctor Quartz Again.
693—The Famous Case of Doctor Quartz.
694—The Chemical Clue.
695—The Prison Cipher.
696—A Pupil of Doctor Quartz.
697—The Midnight Visitor.
698—The Master Crook's Match.
699—The Man Who Vanished.
700—The Garnet Gauntlet.
701—The Silver Hair Mystery.
702—The Cloak of Guilt.
703—A Battle for a Million.
704—Written in Red.
705—The Collodion Stain.
707—Rogues of the Air.
709—The Bolt from the Blue.
710—The Stockbridge Affair.
711—A Secret from the Past.
712—Playing the Last Hand.
713—A Slick Article.
714—The Taxicab Riddle.
715—The Knife Thrower.
716—The Ghost of Bare-faced Jimmy.
717—The Master Rogue's Alibi.
719—The Dead Letter.
720—The Allerton Millions.
722—The House of Whispers.
723—The Blue Room Mystery.
728—The Mummy's Head.
729—The Statue Clue.
730—The Torn Card.
731—Under Desperation's Spur.
732—The Connecting Link.
733—The Abduction Syndicate.
736—The Toils of a Siren.
737—The Mark of a Circle.
738—A Plot Within a Plot.
739—The Dead Accomplice.
740—A Mysterious Robber.
741—The Green Scarab.
742—The Strangest Case on Record.
743—A Shot in the Dark.
746—The Secret Entrance.
747—The Cavern Mystery.
748—The Disappearing Fortune.
749—A Voice from the Past.
752—The Spider's Web.
753—The Man With a Crutch.
754—The Rajah's Regalia.
755—Saved from Death.
756—The Man Inside.
757—Out for Vengeance.
758—The Poisons of Exili.
759—The Antique Vial.
760—The House of Slumber.
761—A Double Identity.
762—"The Mocker's" Stratagem.
763—The Man that Came Back.
764—The Tracks in the Snow.
765—The Babbington Case.
766—The Masters of Millions.
767—The Blue Stain.
768—The Lost Clew.
769—The Midnight Message.
770—The Turn of a Card.
771—A Message in the Dust.
772—A Royal Flush.
773—The Metal Casket Mystery.
774—The Great Buddha Beryl.
775—The Vanishing Heiress.
776—The Unfinished Letter.
777—A Difficult Trail.
778—A Six-word Puzzle.
779—Dr. Quartz.
780—Dr. Quartz's Oath.
781—The Fate of Dr. Quartz.
782—A Woman's Stratagem.
783—The Cliff Castle Affair.
784—A Prisoner of the Tomb.
785—A Resourceful Foe.
786—The Heir of Dr. Quartz.
787—Dr. Quartz, the Second.
788—Dr. Quartz II. at Bay.
789—The Great Hotel Tragedies.
790—Zanoni, the Witch.
791—A Vengeful Sorceress.
792—The Prison Demon.
793—Doctor Quartz on Earth Again.
794—Doctor Quartz's Last Play.
795—Zanoni, the Transfigured.
796—The Lure of Gold.
797—The Man With a Chest.
798—A Shadowed Life.
799—The Secret Agent.
800—A Plot for a Crown.
801—The Red Button.
802—Up Against It.
803—The Gold Certificate.
804—Nick Carter's Hurry Call.
805—Nick Carter's Ocean Chase.
806—Nick Carter and the Broken Dagger.
807—Nick Carter's Advertisement.
808—The Kregoff Necklace.
809—The Footprints on the Rug.
810—The Copper Cylinder.
811—Nick Carter and the Nihilists.
812—Nick Carter and the Convict Gang.
813—Nick Carter and the Guilty Governor.
814—The Triangled Coin.
815—Ninety-nine—and One.
816—Coin Number 77.
817—In the Canadian Wilds.
818—The Niagara Smugglers.
819—The Man Hunt.

NEW SERIES

NICK CARTER STORIES

1—The Man from Nowhere.
2—The Face at the Window.
3—A Fight for a Million.
4—Nick Carter's Land Office.
5—Nick Carter and the Professor.
6—Nick Carter as a Mill Hand.
7—A Single Clew.
8—The Emerald Snake.
9—The Currie Outfit.
10—Nick Carter and the Kidnaped Heiress.
11—Nick Carter Strikes Oil.
12—Nick Carter's Hunt for a Treasure.
13—A Mystery of the Highway.
14—The Silent Passenger.
15—Jack Drewen's Secret.
16—Nick Carter's Pipe Line Case.
17—Nick Carter and the Gold Thieves.
18—Nick Carter's Auto Chase.
19—The Corrigan Inheritance.
20—The Keen Eye of Denton.
21—The Spider's Parlor.
22—Nick Carter's Quick Guess.
23—Nick Carter and the Murderess.
24—Nick Carter and the Pay Car.
25—The Stolen Antique.
26—The Crook League.
27—An English Cracksman.
28—Nick Carter's Still Hunt.
29—Nick Carter's Electric Shock.
30—Nick Carter and the Stolen Duchess.
31—The Purple Spot.
32—The Stolen Groom.
33—The Inverted Cross.
34—Nick Carter and Keno McCall.
35—Nick Carter's Death Trap.
36—Nick Carter's Siamese Puzzle.
37—The Man Outside.
38—The Death Chamber.
39—The Wind and the Wire.
40—Nick Carter's Three Cornered Chase.
41—Dazaar, the Arch Fiend.
42—The Queen of the Seven.
43—Crossed Wires.
44—A Crimson Clew.
45—The Third Man.
46—The Sign of the Dagger.
47—The Devil Worshipers.
48—The Cross of Daggers.
49—A Risk of Life.
50—The Deeper Game.
51—The Code Message.
52—The Last of the Seven.
53—Ten-Ichi, the Wonderful.
54—The Secret Order of Associated Crooks.
55—The Golden Hair Clew.
56—Back From the Dead.
57—Through Dark Ways.
58—When Aces Were Trumps.
59—The Gambler's Last Hand.
60—The Murder at Linden Fells.

Dated November 8th.

61—A Game for Millions.

Dated November 15th.

62—Under Cover.

Dated November 22nd.

63—The Last Call.

Dated November 29th.

64—Mercedes Danton's Double.

PRICE, FIVE CENTS PER COPY. If you want any back numbers of our weeklies and cannot procure them from your news dealer, they can be obtained direct from this office. Postage stamps taken the same as money.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 79-89 Seventh Ave., NEW YORK CITY